

Darshan

Autumn Equinox
2019



Awake Yoga
Meditation

AWAKE YOGA MEDITATION

Awake Yoga Meditation is a vibrant spiritual community oriented around awakening to our true divine nature. With love and good humor, our community helps each other to wake up through yoga philosophy, Advaita Vedanta, and the mystical teachings of Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Zen, Hinduism, and Judaism. Meditation, Kriya yoga, self-inquiry, and devotional practices are integral to these teachings.

We offer weekly meditations for adults and children, spiritual discussion, and meditation instruction. All are welcome.

Schedules and Information

Sunday Morning Meditation for Adults

Sunday Morning Meditation for Children (Sept - June)

Every Sunday at 11:00 a.m.

Friday Night Healing Meditation, every Friday at 7:30 p.m.

Visit AwakeYogaMeditation.org for more information on schedules and special events.

Temporary Location of Sunday Morning Meditation

Waldorf School

4801 Tamarind Road

Baltimore, MD 21209

Temporary Location of Friday Night Meditation

Ruscombe Mansion Community Health Center, Hill House

4803 Yellowwood Avenue

Baltimore, MD 21209

Swami Nityananda offers private instruction in meditation (including Kriya yoga) and private spiritual counseling sessions by appointment. Call Lakshmi at 410-591-2646 or email Swami@AwakeYogaMeditation.org to schedule a conference.

LAND OF TRANQUIL LIGHT

Who does not want to live in a Land of Tranquil Light? Doing so elicits a dynamic, brilliant, steady life. The phrase offers a way of talking about heaven.

The term comes from Nichiren, a 13th century Japanese Buddhist. At a time of great political oppression and abuse, he stoked controversy by standing with the common people. He so touched the hearts of ordinary people that it proved to be impossible to stamp out his teachings. Despite being exiled and despite an attempt to execute him, he prevailed. What he taught was this: Every sister and brother on the planet, know that Awake Buddha nature is what we are. Even when we feel we are enduring a situation of painful oppression, awake nature is right there with us. Even if we are cast into hell, we'll find the Buddha there, because there is nowhere any of us can go and not be in the presence of truth.

Nichiren also taught harmony. Learn how to live in harmony with your human sisters and brothers. The awake nature is right now within every single person on the planet, including the confused ones who are causing a lot of mayhem. Anything that gives you pause, gives you anguish, makes you want to lift up your hands to the heavens and say, "Divine Grace, what the heck is going on?" Or as Zora Neal Hurston used to say, "People, my people! What are we thinking?" Be willing to see only the awake nature in everyone. Serve only that. You can develop a laser vision to see past destructiveness, confusion, and disruption.

If we're reacting, deploring, and denouncing, we are not able to be present and of service. Know the secret that we are only disturbed by what we see outwardly if we haven't healed that within ourselves. As soon as we heal inwardly whatever we're seeing outwardly, we are unshaken. That is not to say we would ever advocate harmfulness, violence, or hatred. That capacity exists within us and it is only if we have totally turned to that capacity within ourselves and said, *Self, that could be me if conditions or circumstances were different*, that we embrace and

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heal that aspect of ourselves. We bring it up into the light and then truly are able to be compassionately present and of service. When we're able to stand in love, steadiness, patience and kindness, we're able to walk with ourselves and others when we're moving through what looks like hell, which turns out later to have only ever been the Land of Tranquil Light. Or as our own Srimati Shanti used to say, "Harmony prevails!"

Buddhists also use a phrase meaning the Pure Land. A corollary term from the yogic tradition is *Brahmi Sthiti*, which means you are so steady in God, you're so in the presence of God, that you're always in contact with the divine reality that is underneath all appearances. Underneath pain, anger, sadness, there is only Divine Grace, love, Buddha nature, the awareness that is present with, for, and through all of us.

A little tree grows up to be a big tree. That's just its natural state of development. It's not a big deal, but simply what trees do in being themselves. They tower above us in a glory of green, shining in the sunlight. For all of us, no matter where we are, we're just expanding to be more fully whatever it is that we already are. We're being invited to open our outer eyes and see clearly and also to open our inner eyes and see clearly. It's a natural unfoldment. A tree grows, as we all are doing.

We're not feeding our ego, but acknowledging that we are one with all of creation. Consider the energy of Niagara Falls: that vastness, that energy, pours through each of us. Can you imagine?! We are limitless in our potential and ability. And this is not a big deal! Completely selflessly, we simply invite ourselves to naturally be what we have been forever and allow grace to share through us without limit, allow tranquil light to share through us, allow wholeness, God energy, to share through us. That's what we're all here to do, here in this Land of Tranquil Light.

— Sri Swami Nityananda Giri

TRUE PEACE

Human peace is usually identified with release from tension, anguish of heart, or psychic turmoil. Human peace doesn't last.

True peace is beyond the jurisdiction of what comes into being. Hence, it is forever. It is everlasting.

Holding on to any form of resistance reinforces lack of peace. When that is understood, one prefers to slip into that which is everlasting peace. This sort of peace can be more quickly realized by not simply seeking release from discordance but also by choosing to focus all one's attention on harmony. By being magnetized by harmony, one is absorbed into it and thus discovers the gateway to true peace.

With practice, one returns more easily and quickly to the transcendent peace. By blessing all your experiences as creating ever-greater yearning for abiding peace, you are strengthened in spiritual discernment and in your ability to reorient your focus to the positive value of every experience. Such a positive attitude and perception is a precursor to the realization of true peace.

When you look upon a world of turmoil and chaos, it is easy to lose your forbearance. But by returning to the center of peace, not only are you inspired to be a peacemaker but also you are motivated to vibrate peace to the whole world.

Peace that passes all human understanding is abiding in that which is.

Aum Shanti Shanti Shanti.

—*Sri Swami Shankarananda Giri*



BEING AWARENESS

Much of our experience of suffering in life is caused and perpetuated by a chain of codependent, co-arising factors which interdependently support one another, have a sort of structural integrity, a massiveness which can leave us feeling stuck. By touching any one of these factors we can disassemble the entire framework and avail ourselves of the peace and joy of life that are revealed when that which blocks our experience of them melts away. Unawareness is one of these factors. Unconsciousness is like being asleep to life. One may be very, very active and yet very much asleep, in which case, one is very much reactive to life, heaping reaction upon reaction and likely causing havoc along the way, unaware of what exactly is driving and is at the root (motive) of one's actions. Waking up means in part to be aware when we are not aware and to be conscious of that which is not conscious.

Initially, awareness may mean to "be aware of" something. Given a state of consciousness based in differentiation, a preliminary step on a path to pure awareness may include providing an object, a "something" on which to focus (one's breath, a mantra). Having initiated awareness and with practice, cultivating focus, one eventually becomes firmly established in concentrated one-pointedness. Along the way, one includes absolutely everything that arises in consciousness as an object of pure awareness, quite distinct from inner conversation, dialogue, descriptions, assessments, and judgments (though these, too, are suitable objects of pure observation).

An important and significant aspect of this journey is the relinquishment of all attachment to any and all notions of oneself as a separate self, a subject that is "aware of." (Thankfully, this naturally happens for us if we will put forth the effort.) Pure awareness has no subject or object. One moves from a state of "being aware of" to pure awareness; being simply, fully aware, conscious, awake. By the transformative power of awareness itself, differentiation and objectification fall away and pure awareness, plain, simple, pure is-ness is the reality from which we step forth into life in these human forms. This is our birthright and our duty, to be fully human and to participate in, dance in, celebrate in the unfoldment and fulfillment of the manifestation of pure awareness expressed through our precious lives.

CONSCIOUSNESS OF PERSONAL OBLIGATION

Consciousness of personal obligation is the inspiration of all virtues and righteousness. It is the spirit of ethical duty and spiritual idealism. The primary purpose of education, secular and religious, is to awaken the consciousness of personal obligation within each individual.

The value of culture is determined by the degree of the consciousness of personal obligation instilled into the mind of the individual. Personal obligation and individual responsibility are synonymous, signifying identical ethical and spiritual principles. God has created each of us as an individual being, an individual soul; therefore, it becomes self-evident that every one of us must have personal obligations to fulfill.

The realization of the individuality of the soul awakens the consciousness of personal obligation within us. In the attainment of the salvation of the soul the supreme personal obligation of man is fulfilled. Our highest obligation is accomplished in the realization of the perfection of God. Salvation is the liberation of soul in the perfection of God. It is the realization of soul's absolute identity with God. Salvation is God-realization. Salvation is self-attained.

We are all aware of this supreme obligation. Our soul constantly reminds us that we have a divine obligation to God. The attainment of the realization of God is the noblest duty of the human soul.

The consciousness of personal obligation inspires and aids in the unfolding of the following virtues within us: goodwill, service, prudence, philanthropy, generosity, altruism, and benevolence.

— *Sri Swami Premananda Giri*

STORYTIME

A teen received an elaborate puzzle with 500 pieces. She poured out all the pieces on a table, flipped them face up, and pondered where to begin to put this fragmented picture together. Like many a good puzzle-doer, she first found the four corner pieces and then separated out all the straight-edged pieces that would constitute the border.

At first it was very hard to figure out how to piece together the border—mostly the process was by trial and error and retrieval. Finally, she got the entire border together. But now it was even more difficult to start getting the inner pieces in place.

When she had about half of the pieces fitted together, the picture began to reveal its totality and the process went a bit faster, and when three-fourths were in place it became easier still. The last 20 or 30 pieces went like a breeze.

In the process of realizing our divinity, the first or earliest steps may seem the least productive and we may feel they are getting us nowhere. Once we get going in earnest, we have dug deeper and the process may seem even more challenging because the more we unfold the more may be revealed that needs transforming.

But there comes a time when our self-transformational effort reaches critical mass, that is, we have learned to know ourselves enough that we see more clearly what the next steps should be—or we learn simply to relax into our divinity and trust the process. But all the stages we have been through were necessary, even as finding the border pieces, while not in itself building the puzzle, was necessary in successfully completing it.

—*Srimati Shanti Mataji*

THE OCEAN OF PERFECTION

*That is Perfect, This is Perfect. Out of that Perfection emanates this
Perfection. In the Ocean of Perfection surge the waves of Perfection.
Yet that Perfection is never lost.*

The Prayer of Perfection is a constant companion—a friend that accompanies me everywhere. Sometimes I forget that it is in my back-pocket, but when I am centered, the wisdom of these simple lines helps me through fears, challenges and disappointments.

I reflected on the Ocean of Perfection recently while sitting on the beach, watching children and adults interact with the water in countless ways. A young teenage girl repeatedly raced into the surf with a boogie board, trying to catch a wave, but invariably flipping over, arms and legs akimbo. A middle-aged couple waded out through the swells, holding hands and jumping in tandem to keep their heads above water. One man dove straight into each breaking wave, addressing them head first to avoid being buffeted by the churning water. Another man swam steadily for hundreds of yards, parallel to shore, outside the breakers, no doubt taking advantage of the current. Some folks walked the beach but avoided getting their feet wet at all.

Just as there is no right or wrong way to play in the ocean, there is no right or wrong way to play with the Divine in the Ocean of Life, the Ocean of Perfection. Every moment, we get to decide whether to appreciate the perfection or to let our judgments limit how we view our time in the water.

The ocean is indifferent to whether we surf, swim, or barely dip our toes in. The waves come and the waves recede. Vedanta teaches us that whether we're being battered by a hurricane or floating in the calmest of waters, all is perfect. Everything we experience in the Ocean of Life, be it humanly pleasurable or painful, provides us with the experience that we need to expand.

As for me, I aspire to emulate my 3-year-old grandson, running full tilt into the water, squealing with delight, fully in the moment.

—Karuna

REVELATIONS OF A COSMIC TRAVELER

Let all our work be sacred, let all our actions be an expression of divine play. Let our efforts be offered to the highest good and deepest gladness for ourselves and for all. Let our deeds reflect and share inspiration, exuberance, faithfulness, sincerity, caring, compassion. No matter how large or how small our activities each day, let them be the Divine in motion. Offering all to God, all becomes sacred play!

Stand up and be strong, Swami Vivekananda urges us. We call upon strength of Soul to stand up within us, to help us be steady and brave, to help us know through and through that it is safe to be ourselves. We are safe to be fully the light that we are. We are safe to be freely the pure love that our soul joyfully invites and urges us to share with ourselves and with all.

Divine Grace, help us to look forward in faith, rather than backward in doubt. Help us to stay in the divine resonance of our highest good and deepest gladness. Help us to magnetize to ourselves lives of joy and upliftment, healing, light, and service. Help us lift ourselves in consciousness so that our very presence reminds others they can do the same.

—Sri Swami Nityananda Giri



IMPOSTOR!

Imagine you have access to a vast super-computer without knowing your coworker inserted a tiny mischievous program designed to give the illusion you are accessing the totality of the computer. This little program proves to be totally unreliable, unstable, and inconsistent in doing anything but the most basic tasks. Before you know it, you find yourself devoting years to fiddling and fixing never-ending program glitches.

The fictional little identity that we call ego is a lot like this limited program. Both are impostors! Our impostor identity is created when we are taught that we are a very limited somebody in a body separate from all other somebodies. We believe this fundamental story about ourselves and then accumulate all kinds of other fabricated beliefs like *I'm smart, I'm not so smart, I'm good, I'm bad. . . .*

New beliefs are added and discarded constantly and so a very unstable and unreliable identity is created. This identity feels so inadequate and insufficient *because* it is so inadequate and insufficient. It is not real and it is not what we actually are!

We believe all these feelings of inadequacy are problems to be fixed. We are taught that the path to feeling better is through constantly fiddling with the glitches of the unreal identity in the hope of producing an upgraded version. Our direct experience shows us that this approach can only take us so far. We don't see that feeling inadequate is totally reasonable given that we have adopted a substitute identity that is hopelessly incapable of meeting our expectations for happiness and fulfillment. How could we feel anything but not good enough, ashamed, and afraid? How could we not constantly seek love, approval, and recognition to try to feel better?

Eventually we stop asking an unstable and limited unreal identity to feel adequate and reliable. Eventually we put down all our beliefs about ourselves and start questioning the identity of the one that is struggling so hard to feel better. That willingness to stop struggling is the vital gap in which our true identity can be revealed.

—Murali

TEACHINGS OF THE GURUS

“Swami Premananda’s prayers teach us to see the Divine in all things. If you look quickly back over your week, there are probably places and points of time and encounters and situations with people where it was easy to see the Divine. So also, as you look quickly back over your week, notice anywhere where it was not easy to see the Divine and ask for openness. Say, “I am willing to learn to see the Divine in all.” We’re asking for that grace to expand our hearts, to be able to be present to the vastness of grace and of all of life, whether we’re facing unimaginably difficult human moments, or whether we have whatever it is we most love and feel like we’re jumping up and down with joy and our feet aren’t even touching the ground. The Divine is not less with us in one, and not more with us in the other. The Divine is equally loving us always. We’re asking for clarity of vision to be with pure love always. And when we are, that’s when we become steadfast, unwavering yogis. We become unwavering light, unbroken wholeness, undivided love, present everywhere always. We’re asking that for ourselves, and for everyone on the planet.”

—*Sri Swami Nityananda Giri*

“Let us see what happens in consciousness when the idea of being born and of dying is replaced with manifesting and unmanifesting. For a time we manifest in this dimension and in dimensions beyond that dimension. In my Father’s house are many mansions, or dimensions, and we manifest in all of them until we return to the unmanifest state of existence to return no more. We are born, or manifested, because the divine Self manifests itself as each of us. There is no Self separate from us manifesting itself. There is only one infinite Reality differentiating itself into countless forms or manifestations.”

—*Sri Swami Shankarananda Giri*

“Forget the past. The vanished lives of all men are dark with many shames. Human conduct is ever unreliable until man is anchored in the Divine. Everything in the future will improve if you are making a spiritual effort now.”

—*Swami Sri Yukteswar*

TEACHINGS OF THE GURUS (Continued)

“Acknowledgement with soul of the beneficence of love is gratitude. Love is creatively good. It is divinely active. Love is the self-manifesting attribute of God. The greater the realization of God, the more abundant is the manifestation of the qualities of love. Love offers the fulfillment of our desire, hope, aspiration, and ideal. Only when the gifts of love are received with soul does the virtue of gratitude adorn the heart.”

—*Sri Swami Premananda Giri*

“The ocean of Spirit has become the little bubble of my soul. Whether floating in birth, or disappearing in death, in the ocean of cosmic awareness the bubble of my life cannot die. I am indestructible consciousness, protected in the bosom of Spirit’s immortality. I am no longer the wave of consciousness thinking itself separated from the sea of cosmic consciousness. I am the ocean of Spirit that has become the wave of human life. Like a silent invisible river flowing beneath the desert flows the vast dimensionless river of Spirit, through the sands of time, through the sands of experience, through the sands of all souls, through the sands of all living atoms, through the sands of all space.”

—*Swami Yogananda Paramhansa*



JOY OF THE INFINITE

▪ Allow yourself to call upon support and receive support. Be willing always to turn to the Divine and say, “Teach me. Open my heart. Help me be strong and kind. Help me be tender and brave. Help me be the energy that is the light of love. Help me be wisdom and clarity and clear communication. Help me be healing. Help me be beauty. Help me be lion-hearted love. Help me be large, generous-mindedness, forgiving everyone everything, forgiving even myself. Help me see that there is always a way forward. Help me graciously open to find that way. Help me remember that only Awakeness, the real, exists.”

▪ There’s a beautiful story from the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Old Testament. Jacob wakes up and he says to himself, “Surely, the Lord is in this place and I was unaware of it.” This moment of recognition represents all of us, always; we are invited to wake up and know that everywhere, always, the Lord is present in this place. We are the Awareness, we are the Light, we are the Supreme Love, we are never separated from it. We are endless consciousness and bliss; the light that swallows darkness reminds us of this truth when we are told in the yogic teachings, “You are That. That thou art.”

▪ Help us to remember that we are the Divine Care that knows, and remembers, and lives the truth. Even a sparrow cannot fall to the Earth outside of Divine Care. Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

▪ The Divine is telling us through all voices if we can hear it, “You are known. You are seen. You are precious. You are beloved. You are light. You are supreme, shining, pure love.” Be that. Very simply, in the midst of daily life, be kindness. Be helpfulness. Be hopefulness. Be humility. Be generosity. Be good humor. Be forgiveness. Be beauty. Be balance. Be the wholeness that you are, that I am, that we all are, forever.

—In joy, Swami Nityananda Giri

SWAMI SHANKARANANDA'S PEARLS

- Love is powerful enough to change everything that limits you into something that brings you joy and greater freedom and creativity. The more you choose to love, the more love you have in your life.
- When Yeshua said, “Be of good cheer,” it means don’t worry about anything. How is worry going to bring more joy and love? You can turn all of it around by choosing love in every situation. Whatever you give your attention to sets into motion more of the same.
- One indication that you love yourself is that you no longer judge yourself. Judgment is born of separateness, not love.
- It’s impossible to truly love your neighbor unless you first love your Self. The moment you really love your Self, you discover that your neighbor is also your Self, because in love we are one. All divisions, all distinctions, all separations are ultimately unreal.
- Joy is not contingent on anything of this world. No one can take from you the joy you find within yourself.
- The God-self dwells in all hearts because love is unconditional. It doesn’t love just a few, those who look well or dress well or earn a lot. No enlightened being ever said the kingdom of God is to be found or attained outside of you. The Beloved is within you.
- My heart reaches out to everyone when I think about the human heart. If you can really get this, I won’t have to reincarnate again. Whenever you see anyone suffer or act violent or cruel, you will recognize that what that being is wanting to communicate is this: “All I’ve ever wanted to do is to love. All I’ve ever wanted to feel is love.”
- In your own life, the proof that you love unconditionally is that you do not wish ill to come to your enemy. Love is kind, it is never cruel or vindictive. It never blames. Love changes everything in your life that needs changing. That is how powerful love is.

GARLAND OF TRUTHS

“If you let go a little, you will have a little peace. If you let go a lot, you will have a lot of peace.”

—Ajahn Chah

“Let-go is a deep understanding of the phenomenon that we are part of one existence. We cannot afford to have separate egos; we are one with all. And the all is vast, immense. The understanding of let-go helps you to be simply here, without any goals, without any idea of achievement, without any conflict, struggle or fight, knowing that it is the fighting with yourself which is simply foolish.”

—Osho

“Let go of the battle. Breathe quietly and let it be. Let your body relax and your heart soften. Open to whatever you experience without fighting.”

—Jack Kornfield

“In the Chinese metaphysical tradition this is termed *wu-hsin* or ‘idealness,’ signifying a state of consciousness in which one simply accepts experiences as they come without interfering with them on the one hand or identifying oneself with them on the other. One does not judge them, form theories about them, try to control them, or attempt to change their nature in any way; one lets them be free to be just exactly what they are. ‘The perfect man,’ said Chuang-tzu, ‘employs his mind as a mirror; it grasps nothing, it refuses nothing, it receives but does not keep.’”

—Alan Watts

“If you want to reach a state of Bliss—make a decision to relinquish the need to control, the need to be approved and the need to judge.”

—Deepak Chopra

I AM DISARMED

I am disarmed.
The hardest war is the war against oneself.
One must disarm.
I waged this war for years, it was terrible.
But now I am disarmed.
I'm no longer afraid of anything, because love banishes fear.
I am disarmed of the need to be right,
to justify myself by judging others.
I am no longer on guard, jealously clutching my wealth.
I accept and share.
I do not particularly care about my ideas, my projects.
If somebody suggests better ones — no, I should say good ones not
better ones — I accept without regrets.
I have stopped making comparisons.
What is good, true, real, is always best for me.
That's why I'm not afraid anymore.
When we have nothing left, we have no fear.
If one disarms oneself, if one dispossesses oneself,
if one opens oneself to the Love that makes all things new,
then that Love erases the bad past
and makes for us a new time where everything is possible.

—*Patriarch Athenagoras I (1886-1972)*

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GUIDED MEDITATION

Communing with the Divine

Lahiri Mahasaya, a teacher in our line of teachers, says, “Whatever exists has its origin in the reality of God.” Anandamayi Ma, a beautiful 20th century yogi from India, says the same thing: “By regarding all manifestations as the Supreme Being, one attains to communion that leads to liberation.” This is a basic yogic principle, a spiritual premise, that is also an approach to transforming our vision, to opening our hearts so that we are able to constantly, continually, consciously be in touch directly with reality, the recognition, the realization, the knowingness that all of this is the Divine. We can make this a practice. Let’s start with something easy and simple and pure.

Look at a vase of flowers and see if you can actually regard them as a manifestation of the Supreme Being. That doesn’t mean just *think* it, but see if you can reach out your feeling awareness toward the flowers and *feel* the supreme, divine, life energy that expresses as the flowers and through the flowers. We’re inviting ourselves to connect and actually touch and feel and be aware of that field of life energy in the flowers. Just open to that possibility. If you don’t feel it instantly, just say, *Divine Grace, I’m willing to clear my vision. I’m willing to open my heart so that I can feel that these flowers are a manifestation of the Supreme Being.* See if you can soften your awareness so that you can almost touch one of the petals as softly and gently as a butterfly lands on a flower. Let your awareness brush the petal of the flower with that kind of tender openness. When you open to that awareness, whatever form it takes, and it takes different forms for every person, that is a doorway to communion, a doorway to liberation, a doorway to being in contact with the divine network, the web of pure light, the web of pure life energy that brings everything into being.

Try this with a candle flame as well. See if you can just lightly open your awareness to the candle flame and give yourself permission to feel the candle flame. That light, that brightness, that warmth, is a manifestation of the Supreme Being. See if you can let your awareness be subtle so that you can tune into the different levels and layers of the candle flame, into the center of the flame and then beyond the center.

GUIDED MEDITATION (Continued)

Don't expect or anticipate what it looks like or feels like for you, but just say, *I'm open to perceiving the candle flame as a manifestation of the Supreme Being. I'm open to that as a form of communion. I'm open to awareness, to welcoming, to expressing gratitude for the liberation that is already here in fullness.*

Now see if you can actually look at your own face, your own body, as if you are standing outside of yourself, a couple of feet in front of yourself. You're seeing your body in whatever condition it's in. It might be really happy and well rested, it might be really tired and hot. Just observe however your body is currently feeling. And play with this, say to yourself, *I'm willing to see my face, my body, my heart, my life, as a manifestation of the Supreme Being. I'm willing to see that what I experience in my daily life is a form of communion, a form of the Divine experiencing the Divine. And when I welcome that, when I recognize that, I'm open to realizing that liberation is already right here. There's no barrier between me and liberation. It's already right here woven into the fabric of my daily life.*

Through these practices, we're giving ourselves permission to cleanse our vision, to let go of any veil that blocks our ever-present clarity so that we have an unwavering recognition that the Divine is here in fullness already. Everything that we perceive, everything we experience, everything that we are, that is the Divine in fullness. When we recognize and actually feel that, in a very direct, simple, pure, clear manner, we're constantly communing with the Divine. There's no separateness, there's just the Divine greeting the Divine always in the midst of our daily life.

— Sri Swami Nityananda Giri

SPIRITUAL READINGS

The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment
by Eckhart Tolle

Originally published in 1997, *The Power of Now* made Eckhart Tolle (b. 1948) one of the most popular spiritual authors in the U.S. after it was endorsed by Oprah Winfrey in 2000, and it continues to be a best-seller with translations in more than 33 languages.

In the preface to the 2004 paperback edition, the German-born author and spiritual teacher says he lived with extreme anxiety and depression until he underwent an inner transformation when he was 29. His efforts to describe how he came to this state of deep peace and bliss became the genesis of this book.

The Power of Now is organized in a question and answer format that encourages the realization of Being in the present moment rather than thoughts limited by our conditioned mind. Tolle outlines both the path and the obstacles in four chapters: “You Are Not Your Mind”; “Consciousness: The Way Out of Pain”; “Moving Deeply into the Now”; and “Mind Strategies for Avoiding the Now.” With practical advice, he guides seekers to let go of the Pain-Body or unconscious emotions and experiences and to see them as an observer, separate from the Self. “Whenever you notice that some form of negativity has arisen within you, look on it not as a failure but as a helpful signal that is telling you: Wake up. Get out of your mind. Be present.”

Tolle emphasizes the importance of staying connected to your inner body at all times and discourages ascetic practices. “The fact is that no one has ever become enlightened through denying or fighting the body or through an out-of-body experience.” He also notes the dysfunctional nature of mind-identification that continues suffering on a personal and global level.

Two statements that beautifully summarize Tolle’s philosophy are: “Everything that exists has Being, has God-essence, has some degree of consciousness” and “You are here to enable the divine purpose of the universe to unfold. That is how important you are!”

THE OPEN, THANKFUL HEART

The Master observes the world but trusts his inner vision. He allows things to come and go. His heart is open as the sky. —Lao tzu

As summer slides into fall, we again witness the easy flow of the cycle of the seasons. The harvest is gathered, leaves fall and plants die, fertilizing the earth with nutrients for the winter ahead and the surge of spring growth. We may recognize this cycle within ourselves as well, finding our energy drawn inward as the days shorten and the nights lengthen, resting, reflecting, and building strength and momentum to burst forth with renewed creativity and commitment when spring arrives.

It's the natural cycle of change throughout nature and all of manifestation. It's the rhythm of coming and going, of giving and receiving. We see it reflected in our in-breath and out-breath, in the pumping of our hearts. It's also reflected in our human experiences of loss and gain, pain and pleasure, and our choice of reactions or responses to those experiences.

Lao Tzu reminds us that an open heart sees what is happening in the world but remains grounded and unperturbed in the spiritual awareness of oneness, of the Reality underlying all manifestation. The heart that is as open as the sky accepts whatever is at each moment without resistance because whatever comes, whatever goes, is the loving gift of the Divine for the highest and best of all concerned. No matter what the appearance, there is nothing outside of that Love.

The German mystic Meister Eckhart said, "If the only prayer you say in your life is 'thank you,' that would be enough." It's enough because "thank you" is the key to an open heart and the recognition that everything is proceeding in divine perfection because it is the Divine in action. The past can be released as easily as autumn leaves; the future is not yet formed. From this higher, more open perspective, we can see clearly our highest response to whatever is happening in the present moment. There is no grasping, no expectation or attachment to outcome, just trust, wonder, and delight in sweet surrender and thanksgiving to and for All That Is.

—Padma

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Question: My friend's father died about six months ago and something in her snapped. She's just not the same person. She used to be kind and helpful. Something similar happened to me and I don't know why. I used to be naturally helpful when I saw people who needed help. Now I wonder why sometimes I don't even think to be helpful. Will I ever have my same kindness back again?

Answer: God bless the questioner and God bless the kindness in all of us. The good news is that kindness can never leave us because kindness is our own nature. So we are invited to figure out why we seem to feel remote or shut down. Sometimes there's an obvious external trigger, like the death of a parent, and sometimes we honestly don't know why. Mysterious eruptions and cataclysms just seem to happen. Be willing to find and stay with that energy which brings us from darkness to light. Then we will always be able to receive at least glimpses and glimmerings and reminders of our own true nature, which is kindness.

When one experiences a death of someone who is important, it is natural for the landscape of one's life to change. We get used to certain people being part of our lives. This is important to acknowledge so as not to be shaken or surprised by our sullenness. There will come times in life when the landmarks we have used to navigate will disappear. We might lose a spouse or a parent or a friend or a job or a country. That's part of the experience of being human. We get used to our energy field interacting with others in a familiar way and then all of a sudden that ends. We're invited in those moments to be caring to ourselves. It takes us a while to figure out how to navigate in a whole new way.

If you ever see sadness in yourself or others, focus on kindness. There is a teaching that says, either bring water to one who is dying (dying here means being parched with anger or sadness) or help them get to the next village. We will get to that place within where we find a willingness to expand so that we choose to focus only on what is kind, useful, and helpful.

QUESTION AND ANSWER (Continued)

Yogis say the hands and the heart are so connected that heart energy flows right down into the palms of your hands. The love of everyone who has ever loved you is flowing into your palms. Your grandmother, your dad, your friend, your aunt, your neighbor, your cousin, your spouse, your partner, whoever you have ever loved, their love is always with you. Cup your hands. See this as a bowl of light. Everyone you have ever loved is in this bowl of light! Hold them!

We can further access the energy of kindness by using mudras, which focus energy in the form of hand positions, coupled with mantras, which radiate energy in the form of words. First, put your hands together right at the heart. This is a really clearing and balancing way to position yourself. It's both calming and energizing at the same time. It helps us connect with the energy of kindness, called *Ananda*. If you feel your heart has been broken, if you feel yourself stuck anywhere emotionally, this is a fantastic practice. The second mudra is hands out wide in front of you. This couples with the mantra *Sat*, which is truth, existence, beingness. It's everything we've ever experienced. So we've taken the energy of the heart of caring and kindness and we've moved it out in front of us into the realm of time and space. This is a fantastic practice to offer at the beginning of the day. As we do this we're actually sending the energy of love and bliss, wholeness, and kindness out into our day. Thirdly, we place our prayer hands in front of our foreheads as we say the mantra *Chit*, which is the energy of consciousness, the energy of pure life. And then we come back to the heart to *Ananda*, to kindness. Continue this sequence *Ananda-Sat-Chit* for several minutes. Do not be shy. We're filling ourselves as bowls of light. Kindness fills and flows. The energy of the heart is going to go booming out into our energy fields. Have fun!

Allow yourself to connect with the pure support of everyone who has ever loved you, the pure support of this line of teachers, the pure support of your ancestors, the pure support of all the saints and sages, of all the teachers of all times and all lands.

—Sri Swami Nityananda Giri

FROM THE SUNDAY MEDITATION
FOR CHILDREN



During a lesson about healing the illusion of separation, the children began by exploring the question, "How do we see?" They discussed our inner vision and how we can look deeply within and listen to the voice of truth within our hearts. By paying attention to our thoughts, we have the ability replace any thought of fear, doubt, lack of love, etc., by weaving in thoughts of courage, care, appreciation for the gifts of life and love.

The warp of the loom represents the Source, the core of our support that provides strength and a place to hold the color, texture and patterns of form. The warp is clear mind; the weft represents our choice of thoughts of love, caring, and appreciation.

LIGHT OF THE UPANISHADS

To be united with the Lord of Love
Is to be freed from all conditioning.
This is the state of Self-realization,
Far beyond the reach of words and thoughts

To be united with the Lord of Love,
Imperishable, changeless, beyond cause
And effect, is to find infinite joy.
Brahman is beyond all duality,
Beyond the reach of thinker and of thought.

Let us meditate on the shining Self,
The ultimate reality, who is
Realized by the sages in samadhi.

Brahman cannot be realized by those
Who are subject to greed, fear, and anger.
Brahman cannot be realized by those
Who are subject to the pride of name and fame
Or to the vanity of scholarship.
Brahman cannot be realized by those
Who are enmeshed in life's duality.

But to all those who pierce this duality,
Whose hearts are given to the Lord of Love,
He gives himself through his infinite grace;
He gives himself through his infinite grace.

Aum Shanti Shanti Shanti

—*Tejobindu Upanishad*

Translated by Eknath Easwaran

LIGHT OF VEDANTA

Bliss in self-realization, misery in ignorance; peace in the calmness of mind, unbearable agony in its restless state; invincible strength in mastering the senses, and miserable cowardice in slavery to them; look upon these with a serene and calm attitude, realizing that they are inevitable facts of life in the world of duality, and prepare thyself for the spiritual struggle. Then doubt and dejection will not overcome thee, and thou shalt not falter on the path of truth.

Thou shalt thus attain perfect understanding regarding thy dual nature. Thou art both infinite and finite. Finitude is not thy true nature. Verily thou art infinite. Therefore be thou established on thy infinitude. Thus thou shalt be able to free thyself from thy self-inflicted bondage, and shalt realize thyself as the Absolute.

—*Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, verses 38-39*

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Awake Yoga Meditation

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OUR LINE OF TEACHERS

Swami Nityananda

Joyfully following the path blazed by our founding teacher, Swami Shankarananda, our presiding teacher, Swami Nityananda, emphasizes our connection and oneness with all life, selfless service, meditation, Self-realization, and unconditional love. She is dedicated to helping us apply these ideals in our everyday life and promoting the progress of all beings – our global family.

Swami Shankarananda

The spiritual founder and preceptor of the Divine Life Church of Absolute Oneness in Baltimore. He was the disciple of Swami Premananda. Swami Shankarananda left the body on November 24, 2014. He appointed Swami Nityananda as his successor.

Swami Premananda

A direct disciple of Swami Yogananda. Swami Premananda established the Self-Revelation Church of Absolute Monism in Washington, D.C.

Swami Yogananda Paramhansa

He was the first of this line of gurus to come to America, and was the guru of Swami Premananda, ordaining him as a minister in India and later consecrating him as a Swami in America.

Swami Sri Yukteswar

A man of profound wisdom, a great astronomer, and adept in the science of astrology. He was a self-dedicated humanitarian. He was the guru of Swami Yogananda Paramhansa.

Shyamacharan Lahiri

He attained the supreme illumination of God-realization while living an exemplary family life. He was the guru of Swami Sri Yukteswar.

Aum Babaji

A guru of divine revelation and a man of supreme compassion. He was the guru of Shyamacharan Lahiri.



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