

What Is Meditation?

Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī was a great advocate of group meditation. He said that there is a certain power generated when you meditate with others. But a key question comes up. What actually is meditation? Many definitions will be given, but perhaps one is that it is a foundational spiritual experience in its true sense.

The characteristic of a spiritual experience is the absence of the ego. The experience happens. When it is finished, immediately the ego jumps up and claims that it had the experience. But on analysis, we know that the truth is that the ego was not present during the experience, and that is what actually gave it its sacredness.

Just so, we can sit for meditation. Nothing seems to change and then suddenly we realize that something else had taken over. We never realize it at the time, only when the experience ends. What has happened is that the ego has faded away for a period of time and our true natural self has had the field of our mind to itself. We recognize that there has been a different quality about our mind during that period.

One spiritual teacher has even said that meditation is a metaphor for liberation. The word metaphor means a figurative way of saying, so what he is claiming is that meditation is a pointer towards the experience of liberation. The reason is that liberation is our natural state minus the ego. Man minus ego is God.

This is perhaps the true significance and value of repetition of God's name. Whether it is part of our meditation or an introduction to it, repeating God's name invokes His presence in our consciousness. It invokes His presence because by concentrating on the name the ego has the opportunity to drop away. Thus repetition of God's name itself can not only be an introduction to meditation, but meditation itself.