



# THE STAGES OF MEDITATION

**The stages of meditation describe the movement of consciousness as it turns inward to its source, passing through stages of thought, calm, silence, stillness, peace, and bliss.**

Meditation is one of the most direct and effective practices that we can bring into our lives. Regular meditation done each day can help neutralize the tendency of consciousness to go outward and keep us locked in the 'habit of us' by reducing our needs, wants, reactivity and habits of interacting with the world from an egoic place.

Meditation allows us to create some space and distance between our old ways of being and what is yet to come. Ultimately, the return journey of consciousness is from an outward orientation of seeing happiness outside ourselves to an inward orientation, towards God and Truth as the source of our happiness and fulfillment.

When consciousness begins to naturally turn inward, it does so in stages:

## **Thought**

The first stage of meditation is turning your attention inward and becoming aware of your thoughts. Prior to meditation, you are not even aware of your thoughts because you are your thoughts. When you first sit to meditate and become aware of your breath or the energy in your body, you notice your mind's restlessness. Your thoughts are going this way and that. They want to be any other place but here, with you, right here, right now. In this first stage, you become a witness to your thoughts. You begin to see that you are "having" thoughts whereas before you "were" your thoughts. You learn how to be still, to pull inward from the activity of being outward and move into relationship with the very essential quality of what you are.

As you continue to meditate with a regular practice, eventually you are able to be with that part of yourself that is endlessly thinking and complaining as consciousness expands to a place where these things start quieting and losing their vigor.

## **Calm**

As you apply the effort to continue meditating, you come to the second stage which is a relaxation in your meditation. When your thoughts start quieting there is a feeling of calm. There is a sense of calmness and a quieting of the feeling that you are fighting with your mind to meditate. In this stage a sense of being present comes and although thoughts are still there, you move into acceptance or neutrality about them.

As you continue to meditate and this calmness is allowed to deepen, you begin to strengthen that capacity of your intelligence to attend more to the nature of itself. At this point, calmness transitions into a state of silence.

## **Silence**

As calmness deepens, there comes an experience of silence. There is a different quality to silence than just the quieting of thoughts and calmness. When silence comes, the consciousness doesn't immediately turn outward when there is a noise. It isn't immediately disturbed. It will notice the sound but it will still remain aware of itself. One who has attained the state of silence can meditate no matter what is going on around them because they have found inward silence. The nature of this silence is like a breathless moment, a pause. In silence, consciousness is beginning to touch the radiance of its source.

## **Stillness**

As silence starts deepening, stillness occurs. As the system begins to quiet down and the nervous system becomes less reactive, the body relaxes, biological functions slow down and it becomes easier to stay with whatever is happening. As consciousness turns inward on itself, it starts taking on the qualities and characteristics of its origin, which is SAT. The quality of SAT is silence and stillness - immobile, changeless, and immutable.

## **Peace**

Peace is the felt experience of silence. Silence tends to be more in the awareness or mental plane. But once consciousness enters into the body it tends to be experienced as a feeling of peace. A feeling of deep relaxation occurs in the body. Consciousness is deepening into the radiance of itself. The nature of peace is that you do not want to move. There is a tendency of just wanting to stay. This means that the consciousness is now becoming habituated to meditating on its original nature and is beginning to rest in the radiance of its Being, the essential quality of its individuality. It is resting in the essential quality of its awareness.

## **Bliss**

When peace deepens, the sense of time drops away and there is an immersion into the radiance of the Being. When that reaches down into the physicality of the body, bliss is experienced. The SAT awareness, intelligence, is paying attention to the experience of its embodied condition. The SAT, the descending force, is becoming aware of the ascending force and in meeting each other there is a feeling of bliss, a bodily experience of Ananda. When bliss comes, you are actually experiencing the state of the Self.