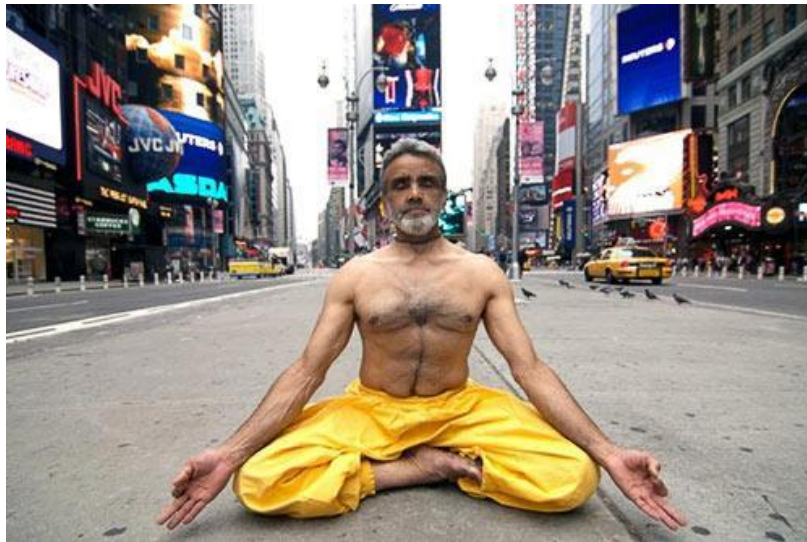


Interview | Dharma Mittra: What is Meditation?

 by [Dharma Mittra](#)

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"The highest state of meditation is Samadhi, where there is no ego anymore, no doubts, no me, no you, no notion of time, no eating, no talking, no walking, no working and not doing anything at all, realizing that the Self is action-less." ~Dharma Mittra

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Yogi Sri Dharma Mittra and ask him some questions on the subject of meditation. While Sri Dharma has always taught meditation as part of his classes and workshops, he has of late been speaking more publicly about what meditation is really all about from a theoretical and practical standpoint and how so much of everything else we do in yoga is just a preparation for it.

Adam Frei: [What is meditation?](#)

Sri Dharma Mittra: Concentration is the ability to keep your attention on one object without break for about 12 seconds. 12 units of concentration, about two-and-a-half minutes, make one unit of meditation according to Swami Sivananda. Your concentration is getting deeper and steadier the longer it is sustained. When you are able to do 12 unbroken units of meditation, about half an hour (without distraction is extremely difficult!), you start automatically being identified with the object of your concentration. You are going deeper: penetrating, becoming; surrendering all your ego just like G-d. You surrender, you surrender until you become the object.

The description in the paragraph above is for beginners – for people who never did concentration. In actual practice, concentration may be different for everybody. Let's say that you already did meditation in the past, that you practiced meditation in the past. Then you already have this ability when you are born in this lifetime. As soon as you close your eyes, you may enter into Samadhi immediately. You were in meditation in less than one minute – maybe in less than 10 seconds! It's all according to what you have done. But those who are first studying meditation now, it's the way it appears in the paragraph above.

In dealing with meditation, it is always worth mentioning that you don't have to be sitting to practice, but you have to be steady in one thing. For

example, I have a student who came to my class every Saturday for over ten years, but every Saturday without fail. That is the very definition of steadiness. So, to meditate is more about steadiness than it is about how you sit or the quality of your concentration, or anything else. Let's say you remember G-d once a day even for just one second, but every day. That is concentration. This steadiness in concentration brings fruits (results). It's not that you concentrate on G-d for one whole day, and then you forget about Him – no, that's not concentration. The secret is to have firm regular concentration on one thing.

For a person who takes yoga classes, the same thing applies. You come once a month to class, but never miss one month: you're always there without fail. That's another facet of concentration. If you always remember the Almighty One, are always steady in that no matter what even for just one second every day, that's sustained concentration also. All these are facets of concentration. All of these are better than the other one (the other type of meditation) where you just sit there and you don't know where you are or what's happening to you.

Adam Frei: Should meditation be part of regular yoga practice? What techniques do you recommend?

Sri Dharma Mittra: Well, it is always good to retire in solitude, to gradually become free from cravings, to be able to sit for five minutes without becoming restless. Cravings will torment you immensely, but as you sit for at least five minutes every day, you'll be able over time to extend that to a half an hour of just being quiet without any action. It is in the absence of mental activities that you get recharged, that you come to operate on higher levels. We are not the body or the activities so it is good always to sit quietly like a witness watching the activities of the body and mind. You realize through this practice that everything is passing away all the time. This is not this kind of meditation that you lose your consciousness. No, it's just to sit quietly and keep watching, observing. If you can't be quiet like this, if you are not ready for this, you may concentrate on a picture or a diamond, the sun, a flower, or anything. But, the best thing is to sit comfortably for this with the eyes almost closed. There you remain unconcerned watching the activities of the mind.

Adam Frei: Is meditation for everyone?

Sri Dharma Mittra: Meditation is available to anyone regardless of where you are starting from. For those who are not in good physical condition, lie down to practice. Lie down in a very comfortable position, but don't fall asleep! And there you stay trying to be unconcerned just like a witness. All these techniques lead to the mind becoming sharp, and then you'll be able to find answers.

Adam Frei: How did you learn how to meditate? Did it come easily to you? What techniques do you recommend for beginners?

Sri Dharma Mittra: With some knowledge gained from The Bhagavad-Gita, The Yoga-Sutras, Self Knowledge and my Teacher also, I seriously started to take action upon this knowledge. For years now, I concentrate most of my attention on this type of meditation: "Study of the Self" or "Meditation Without Seed". Since I consider this to be the most high and efficient type of meditation, I view this technique as the only and last practice that will take me from the unreal to the Real. Regular practice of this technique generates lots of spiritual enthusiasm and, as a result, immediate success in meditation.

This kind of meditation is not fit for beginners (younger souls). I recommend for the beginners to concentrate on something that's pleasant to the eyes like gazing at a flower, candle flame or Om symbol for about 5-10 minutes. Then, with the eyes closed, try to see it for another 5-10 minutes. This technique of dealing with an external or gross object through the sense of sight is fit for almost everyone since sight is the strongest of the senses. Or, concentrate on a quality like compassion or on the breath for 15 minutes. Another wonderful technique that's fit for anyone is to concentrate on the space between the eyebrows for as long as is comfortable. Whatever technique you are practicing, it's important to be sitting up straight with head and back erect.

Adam Frei: I've heard you say that meditation isn't something that came as easily to you as some of the other limbs of practice. I was recently transcribing something where you were talking about the type of meditation that is constant reflection. Did you receive specific instruction in seated meditation of the sort popular in many Buddhist circles and in much of the yoga world of today?

Sri Dharma Mittra: I teach people to do concentration before meditation. Concentrate on a candle flame or on a flower, and then they try to visualize it. Occasionally I say: "All right, keep your attention between the eyebrows." I myself never did this kind of meditation much. I always prefer sometimes trying to visualize something to stimulate the Third Eye. This traditional, typical type of meditation, I never – I don't think I ever meditated like this even once in my life because the mind is always never quiet. This typical type of meditation that you don't know where you are, where you fall into a trance, I never found any purpose for it. I like meditation without seed where you stay 100% awake and you don't have even to be sitting – you may be even lying down. I do that for an hour or a half an hour before I fall unconscious when I go to bed each night.

The meditation that I encourage people to pursue is watching all the time while you are doing whatever you are doing. I recommend to people that if they want to do meditation without seed, they must use a chair or something extremely comfortable to sit on unless they are fortunate enough to have good knees to stay in that pose (Lotus or Siddhasana) for a long time. But I don't recommend the meditation where you become unconscious and fall into these trances where you don't know where you are or what's happening.

Meditation also means concentration. You don't have to do all these things (practice all these techniques), but if in your mind you are always remembering the L-rd, you are always in meditation. For example, if when you walk in the street, your thoughts are resting on the L-rd, then it's meditation. So, I always encourage the Study of the Self: a meditation that doesn't require stopping the mind or anything like that. The main point to succeed in meditation is to gradually be free from cravings, from fickleness, from opening the eyes, or from becoming nervous if you are not

experiencing anything. You have to eventually be able to sit quietly for an hour without being nervous. To achieve this, gradually, you must eat the right food so that the mind is no longer jumpy. If you eat too much spicy or animal-based food, you'll never be able to concentrate on anything.

So, the typical type of meditation I don't recommend. I never did this kind of meditation. I tried, but I never found any real interest in it. I want to know something – to see what is happening. Through Study of the Self, I learned many things.

Adam Frei: I've been in situations with you like in meetings where it feels almost psychically like you disappear. You sit very quietly and I feel like you... I can look at you and I can see you, but if it feels like you're gone. Is it just that the concentration is sustained in such a way?

Sri Dharma Mittra: Yes. Your mind is resting a little bit in this Eternal Now. This is beyond time. You see things already ahead of time – it's not here anymore. In a moment, now is gone. Sometimes, your mind operates at that level. So, you see everything's gone already. I see this Center (the Dharma Yoga New York Center) gone. In a minute, I can mentally see everything altered / changed. That is a good sign – a sign of progress when you can see that. The mind is stopping on the Eternal: you see everything passing away. I see myself talking, I see myself doing this, that. Everything is gone.

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Yogi Sri Dharma Mittra was born in 1939 in Brazil and first encountered reincarnation and the Laws of Karma at age 14, yoga at 17, all through the pages of books. From 1958-1964, Sri Dharma served in the Brazilian Air Force and focused on bodybuilding and wrestling in his spare time. In 1964, Sri Dharma met his Guru in New York City and immediately became a full-time Yogi. Two years later, h... [READ MORE](#)

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