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lifestyle for the modern yogi



Photography by Cameron Karsten

travel in the realm of pure consciousness

by deepak chopra, m.d.

the journey within

In the hatha yoga tradition, Raja yoga is known as the royal path that harmonizes human consciousness and divine consciousness. The essence of Raja yoga is moving beyond the mind's turmoil into an entirely different place—one of pure silence and inner peace. It is a practice that allows us to spontaneously realize that we are not a limited ego-mind, but rather we are eternal beings on a cosmic journey.

As elaborated by the ancient sage Patanjali, there are eight branches of Raja yoga, which include the asanas (or postures)—the aspect most people probably think of when they hear the word "yoga." For this month's special edition on travel, I will focus on the seventh branch, Dhyana—the yoga of meditation.

Meditation is a yogic practice that allows us to enter a state of expanded awareness and profound calm. Most of the time we fill our internal dialogue with a repetitive series of worries, resentments, wishful thoughts, unfulfilled hopes, fantasies and vague dreams. When we examine this background static, we realize that even if we are not aware of it, the internal dialogue going on inside is literally controlling us.

Meditation takes us beyond the internal dialogue to the quiet of a mind that is not

imprisoned by the past or the future. This silence is the very thing we want to bring into our awareness through the practice of meditation. Why is this so important?

It is important because silence is the birthplace of happiness. Silence is where we get our bursts of inspiration, our tender feelings of compassion and empathy, our sense of love. These are all delicate emotions and the chaotic roar of the internal dialogue easily drowns them out. When we discover the silence in our minds, we no longer have to pay attention to all those random images that trigger worry, anger and pain.

By developing a regular meditation practice, our experience of stillness grows and, gradually, we will be able to remain in a state of centered awareness even in the midst of chaos and turmoil. This is the ultimate purpose of yoga: the harmonious union of mind, body, and spirit. Mahatma Gandhi expressed this idea beautifully by saying, "In the attitude of silence, the soul finds the path in a clearer light and what is elusive and deceptive resolves itself into crystal clearness." ●

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