

Atma-Vichar meditation

Atma-Vichar in Sanskrit, "Self-enquiry" in English is a form of meditation and self-reflection aimed at understanding one's true nature. In Atma-Vichar, one asks questions like "Who am I?" or "For whom does the experience happen?" and observes what you identify as "I" in your experience, seeking its source, which in turn provides insight into your true nature. This meditation is inspired by the teachings of Ramana Maharshi and is designed to help people explore and understand themselves at a profound level.

1. Find a calm and comfortable place

Select a quiet and peaceful place where you won't be disturbed during your meditation session. Sit in a comfortable position, either in a chair with your feet flat on the ground or cross-legged on a cushion on the floor (Sukhasana or Siddhasana). Keep your spine straight but shoulders relaxed.

2. Set a time limit at first

Determine the duration of your meditation session. Start with a shorter time, such as 15-20 minutes, and gradually increase it as you become more comfortable with the practice. 30 minutes is a good duration to aim for at first. Once you feel comfortable with 30 minutes, you can extend the meditation for as long as you want.

3. Relaxation and breath awareness

Before delving into self-exploration, take a few minutes to relax and calm your mind. Close your eyes and focus on your breath. Breathe in a relaxed and natural manner, observing how your breath rises and falls. This helps calm your mind and prepare it for introspection.

4. Contemplate your sense of "I"

The core of Atma-vichar meditation is to explore the self or "I." Begin by asking yourself, "Who am I?" or "For whom is this happening?" Let this question permeate your being. Pay attention to what you consider to be "I" and attempt to trace its source, not through analysis but by using your attention.

5. Observe your thoughts

Observe your thoughts without getting entangled in them. Do not judge or analyze them; just witness them as they come and go. Return your attention to the question, "For whom does this thought arise?" when thoughts relate to me, mine, or my. If you get lost in thoughts, return to your breath for a few breaths and then continue the self-exploration.

6. Be persistent and patient

Self-exploration can be challenging because the mind tends to wander or resist Self-inquiry. Be persistent and patient. Keep returning to the question, even if it seems repetitive or if you initially feel uncertain about its effectiveness.

7. An experience of silence and stillness

Sometimes, the question "bites" when posed, and you will experience moments of silence and stillness. These moments are openings that provide insight into the nature of the Self. Even if you feel somewhat unfamiliar or disoriented in these moments, rest here. Over time, you will become accustomed, and the inner silence will become a natural state.

8. Conclude the meditation

After the allotted time, gradually shift your attention back to your breath. Take a few deep breaths, open your eyes, and sit quietly for a few moments to conclude your meditation session.

9. Gratitude

After your meditation session, take a few moments to rest in gratitude for the gift of Atma-Vichar meditation that has come to you, providing you with this opportunity for self-exploration. This deepens the meditation experience.

10. Regularity

Atma-vichar is most effective when practiced regularly. Strive to meditate daily or as often as possible, and gradually increase the duration of your sessions as your practice deepens. Remember that Atma-vichar meditation is a journey of self-exploration, and progress may be gradual. Be patient with yourself and do not expect immediate results. Over time, this practice can lead to a deeper understanding of the Self and an experience of unity with all.

