

The Garden — Visualization

Visual imagery is so much a part of life for about 90% of us. Why not use it as an aid to meditation? Very often the turbulence of thoughts and feelings which keep us from going within have as their content many mentally and emotionally-charged pictures or visualizations. Very often our restlessness and our obstacles are in picture form. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be able to constructively use this visualization capacity and go beyond the turbulence?

How to Practice

As you gaze mentally upward, you see, in the vastness of the blue sky, a glorious golden gate, magnificent in size and the way it reflects light. It has such an inviting artistic form. Here, in this realm of visualization, you stop rising and enter in through these beautiful gates. You feel delighted and privileged to come to this Garden and, as you step into the gates, you behold the most beautiful Garden you've ever seen in your life. A beautiful walkway, you observe, winds gently among the green lawns, the beautiful flowers, the gorgeous trees, to a distant fountain. Someone of particularly beautiful appearance is sitting by that fountain, although you can't quite make out who that person is due to the great distance in this huge and heavenly Garden.

You delightedly walk along the path, pausing wherever you like to enjoy particularly beautiful flowers and trees, enjoying the songs of the birds, the sounds of the Garden. The sunlight plays most beautifully with the gorgeous colors and fragrances of the flowers as they dance in the gentle breeze. The sounds of water coming from the fountain become more distinct as they splash and murmur, each drop reveling in the beautiful light. You enjoy the Garden immensely, finding your heart full of happiness and your senses full of beauty.

Gradually, you come nearer the fountain. And there you recognize the person you have glimpsed from a distance. How beautiful. You now see clearly the form of your Lord (or a great teacher). Perhaps it is the form of Jesus, or Buddha, or Krishna, or a great saintly woman. The beloved one

looks at you and smiles, waves, and welcomes you, comes forward as you rush to him or her and you embrace. With delight, you sit together on a bench or on the ground beside the fountain. Perhaps you just look at one another.

Perhaps the holy being or great teacher tells you one word or in several words or phrases what you need to know to continue your journey of life. Or perhaps you have a long and loving dialogue with the holy one. You enjoy the presence of the beloved as long as you wish.

You then say farewell, perhaps with another embrace or a bow, and then you take leave of the holy person, with the knowledge you can return to this beautiful Garden any time you like. You will be most welcome.

You retrace the path, the walkway, out of the Garden, past all the beautiful flowers and trees. Perhaps, when you arrive at the gate, you turn and wave to the loved one once again before you close the gate and leave this realm of visualization to move through the sky, back down to the earth, enjoying the beauty of its nature as you move presently back to your home through the ceiling, into the room where your body has been completely relaxing.

Benefits

Remember, these are visualizations, the use of your innate faculty to think in pictures and images, in a vivid way. And you are using the visualization to prompt an experience of insight. In a sense, you are using fantasy to prompt insight. Fantasies provide food for thought and new ways of thinking about life. Your insights — indeed, your fantasies — must be tested and examined by common sense and given reality checks in the real world. A true insight will help you and have positive effects in the real world.