

The mantra itself will teach us

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An excerpt from John Main, ESSENTIAL WRITINGS, ed. Laurence Freeman (Marynoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), p. 109.

The purpose of saying the mantra is that it becomes the focus of your attention. We are not thinking of anything nor are we pursuing any insights that may come to us. We let them all fall away as we come to an ever deeper silence in which the only sound is the mantra. The mantra itself will teach us the patience needed to say it. It will also teach the humility needed. In meditating we are not seeking to possess God or to arrive at a profound insight about God. We are seeking simply to accept the gift of our own creation as fully as we presently can and to respond to it as generously as we can. To do this we learn to be still, to be silent, and to be truly humble.

In common-day language, the essence of meditation is to leave the ego behind. We are not trying to see with the ego what is happening. Ego-vision is limited by its own self-centeredness. The eye with which we see without limit is the eye that cannot see itself. The paradox of meditation is that once we give up trying to see and to possess, then we see all and all things are ours.

After Meditation, An excerpt from “October,” Mary Oliver, NEW AND SELECTED POEMS (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), p. 62.

Sometimes in late summer I won't touch anything, not
the flowers, not the blackberries
brimming in the thickets; I won't drink
from the pond; I won't name the birds or the trees;
I won't whisper my own name.

One morning
the fox came down the hill, glittering and confident,
and didn't see me—and I thought:
So this is the world.
I'm not in it.
It is beautiful.