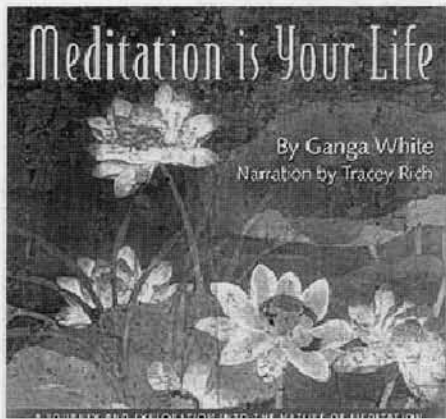


Book Review: Meditation is Your Life



Meditation is Your Life

Audio CD by Ganga White,
Narrated by Tracey Rich
\$14.95 from the White Lotus Foundation
www.whitelotus.org

Reviewed by Karen Schwartz

There is no “how to meditate.”

Listeners who can wrap their minds around this central tenet of Ganga White’s new CD, *Meditation is Your Life*, will follow him on an exploration of the nature of meditation itself, which he describes as a state of being and awareness that can take place at any time.

Meditation is not synonymous with the myriad of meditation practices and techniques that abound. Meditation is an awakening of perception: vital, dynamic, limitless, and constantly evolving.

White, founder and co-director of the White Lotus Foundation in Santa Barbara, CA, makes an emphatic distinction between structured meditation techniques and the state of being to which they may contribute.

This distinction may be difficult to digest for practitioners who define meditation as a formal practice. In particular, they may bristle at the notion that such techniques, when practiced mechanically, routinely, or without questioning, often constitute little more than methods of “mind control”.

White points out that these techniques can have great value, and this CD describes many of them, including more familiar techniques such as sitting, mantra, and breath meditations, as well

as those less commonly considered, such as meditations on relationships, nature, the cosmos, and even death.

However, White maintains that they must be practiced with conscious awareness and interest, and without excluding the possibility for realization in many other arenas of living.

“Everything in life has the potential of moving us to greater understanding and wisdom,” he says, “and we cannot predict where our greatest lessons will lie.”

Narrated by White Lotus co-director Tracey Rich, the CD is an excerpt from White’s forthcoming book, *Yoga Beyond Tradition: Insights to Free and Awaken Your Practice*. As such, it is a straightforward reading of the book chapter, much like a lecture format. While it discusses various meditation techniques, it offers no formal, guided instruction.

This CD offers serious food for thought for any spiritual seeker and provides a preview to what promises to be an equally thought-provoking book from one of Yoga’s great teachers. Yoga therapists and teachers will also find that this CD helps them point out the ways in which their students’ lives already offer rich opportunities in which to find and experience Spirit. •IAYT•

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The following excerpt from *Meditation is Your Life* appears with permission of the author, Ganga White.

It has been said that meditation cannot be taught, but meditation can be learned.

This statement implies that meditation involves subtle dynamics, and not just mechanical practices of technique.

Structured meditation practices can be useful and beneficial. Sitting meditation can contribute valuably to

inward awareness, stilling of the mind, relieving tension, and become a catalyst and impulse for creativity and new ideas. Sitting can be part of increasing self-knowledge and understanding, learning the nature of mind and thought and entering the inner world.

At the same time, it is wise to realize that any tool can be either beneficial or detrimental. It takes sensitive and careful awareness to perceive the appropriateness and usefulness of any practice for yourself at any given time.

Formal spiritual practices tend to be put forth as intrinsically good, and always beneficial. However, we would be better served by understanding that all things can cut both ways, even if intended to have only beneficial effects. Spiritual practices, such as meditation, chanting, prayer, or even *asana* practice, can have beneficial or detrimental results.

If we ask, “Is a knife good or bad?”, the answer is yes. It always depends on the use and intent. There are certainly rules and principles about using a knife safely and correctly, but the real essence of using powerful tools is in an indefinable sense of awareness and sensitivity and action in each moment.

Although practices enable you to get better at what you practice, they can also lead to habitual, unexamined behavior or self-righteousness. Getting better at anything is also double-edged. Improved abilities can be used for good or for harm. There is no guarantee.

What is important, then, to one sincerely seeking spiritual growth, is to keep your attention on the feedback and results, both short-term and long-term of all of your practices. Once again, questioning and inquiry are a light to guide your ever-changing path.

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