

Life is a Lyric

A Practical Guide
to Meditation

PART - 1



HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

Book Title

Life is a Lyric Part 1

Author

His Holiness Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

Published by: Love to Share Foundation America

3363 Bel Mira Way, San Jose CA 95135

Phone: (805) 604-L2SF

Email: contact@lovetosharefoundation.org

Website: www.lovetosharefoundation.org

First edition: 2018

Copyright © LTSFA

All rights reserved

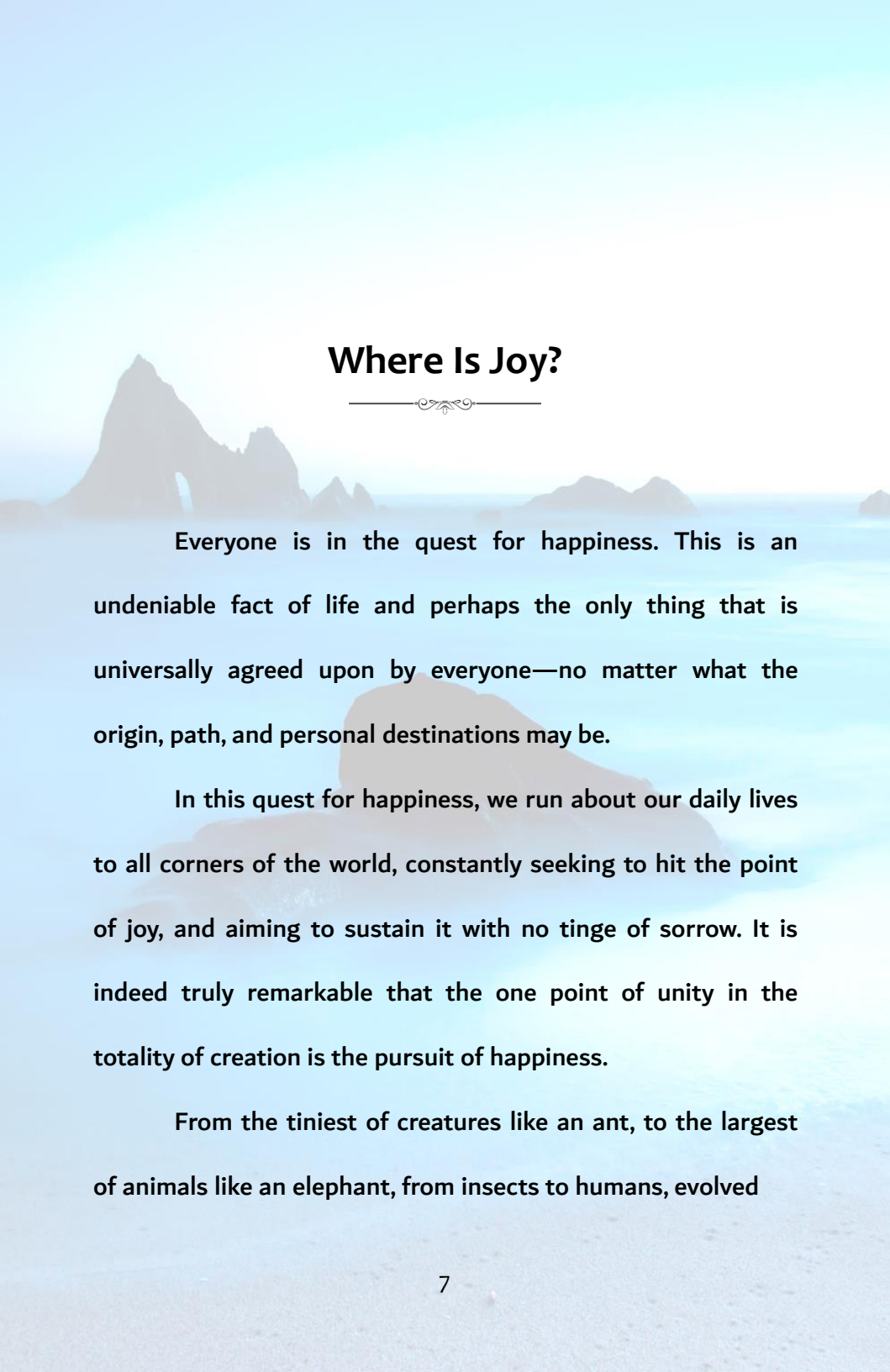


Contents

Where is Joy?.....	7
The Joy Within.....	11
The Mind... ..	15
Our Best Friend.....	21
Meditation.....	27
Preparation.....	31
Means of Meditation.....	35
Mahamantra.....	39
How.....	44
Reality Retreat.....	49

That vast expansion of
happiness and love,
is right within.





Where Is Joy?

Everyone is in the quest for happiness. This is an undeniable fact of life and perhaps the only thing that is universally agreed upon by everyone—no matter what the origin, path, and personal destinations may be.

In this quest for happiness, we run about our daily lives to all corners of the world, constantly seeking to hit the point of joy, and aiming to sustain it with no tinge of sorrow. It is indeed truly remarkable that the one point of unity in the totality of creation is the pursuit of happiness.

From the tiniest of creatures like an ant, to the largest of animals like an elephant, from insects to humans, evolved

beings or otherwise, we are all running towards this high and lofty goal. And we do get a tinge of it from time to time and it feels highly rewarding, doesn't it?

An ant finds a piece of sugar on the floor and labels that happiness, while a honey bee finds that in the nectar of the flowers. We humans find it in a variety of ways - in the tasty foods, in the fragrance of flowers, in sweet musical rhythms, in the grandness of landscapes, and in the embrace of our loved ones. We also find joy in achievements, and in the memories of success.

While 'joy' is subjective, it is undeniable that all of creation is looking to have the same experience of joy, no matter what path or object gives us this joy.

Now, with millions of years of existence chronicled in the history books, has it ever been conclusively documented that anyone has ever achieved this lofty goal of permanent happiness?

Health, wealth, relationships, achievements, longevity, fame, beauty, and success, the long checklist for joy is never ending. When one of this goes up, another goes down. That is simply the fact of life.

We all seek 100% joy and 0% sorrow, but in reality one rarely ever reaches the pinnacle, as long as the search lies in seeking joy in external objects.

We are all running really fast trying to reach a destination we call happiness, but strangely, we keep traveling in the wrong direction, twice as fast. So we are only going to the wrong destination a lot quicker! We realize this when we feel fatigued and end up not being anywhere close to what we set out to achieve!

Even to lift a fruit, one needs to exert some effort of reaching out and grabbing it. But Happiness is even closer. It is within us and only within us. In a way, the grand purpose of human life lies in the realization of this truth, as per all oriental spiritual traditions.



When the ripples
of the mind wear off,
happiness shines forth
effortlessly

Photo: RKve1

The Joy Within

As we saw earlier, almost all the oriental spiritual traditions and many of the western spiritual traditions hold that 'Happiness is within'. Realized Masters show us that our true innate nature is that of unconditional love and joy. So what obstructs the manifestation of this joy within? The key is in the mind.

*Your mind is your friend
And can be the enemy too
It's the cause of bondage
And your freedom too
- The Bhagavad Gita*

This life, a lyric, is composed on the sheet of our body, with the stylus of our mind, inked by the relationships of this world. The key instrument is our mind which defines the color of an otherwise transparent ink of relationships with the world.

Our minds open the door to heaven in this life, but it can also open the doors to hell; no wonder then that it is a key to all our experiences.

The moment we silence the noise in our mind, we are home free! We carry the burden of this noise in our mind. It is this noise that pulls us away from our true nature of love-joy.

Many oriental traditions look at the 'noise' of our mind as ripples on a lake. A placid lake is transparent to its bed while a lake riddled with water ripples loses its transparency. Likewise, a noisy and inattentive mind becomes disturbed. A silent and attentive mind is free of ripples. How do we make this lake placid? How do we silence the mind?

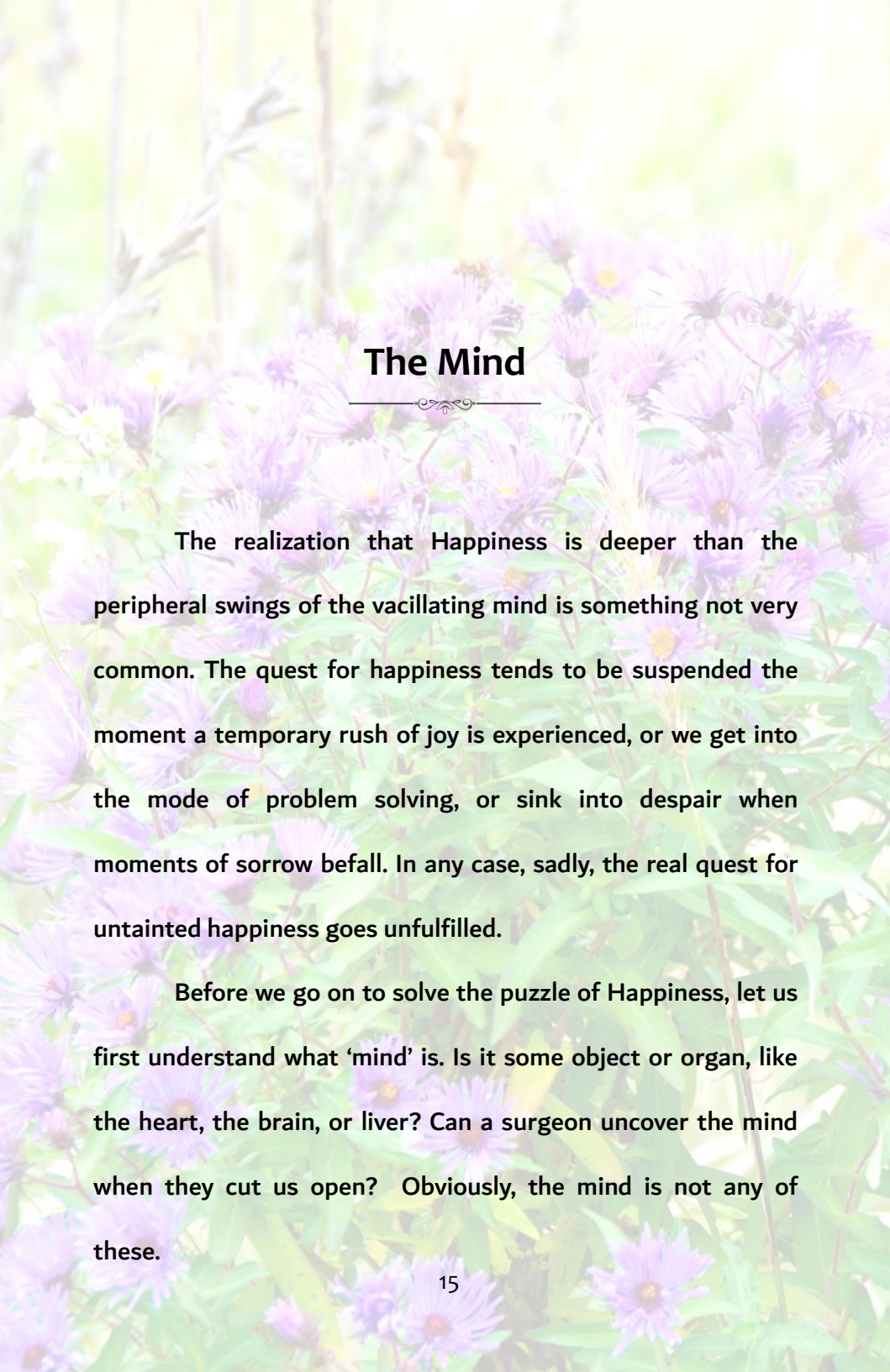
Realized saints compare our quest for happiness in external objects to that of a beggar seeking alms, while being unaware that he is actually sitting on a treasure trove that fully well belongs to him. Why does he not realize that? That treasure which was always available to him, which would totally relieve him of his poverty immediately, was always available in his home. He failed to find it as he was searching outside and not within.

Likewise our pursuit for happiness does not culminate in the search outside but it finds its fruition when it is found within. This can be achieved by silencing the mind, so that the fountainhead of joy that our real nature is, springs forth.

It is the noise of the mind which drowns the sweet music of Happiness of the soul – our true innate nature.

Joy and sorrow are the only two known states of mind as far as man is concerned. Happiness or Divinity is to get past this dual state and be in the constant state of bliss.



The background of the entire page is a soft-focus photograph of numerous purple flowers, likely asters, with green foliage. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, and the overall tone is gentle and natural.

The Mind

The realization that Happiness is deeper than the peripheral swings of the vacillating mind is something not very common. The quest for happiness tends to be suspended the moment a temporary rush of joy is experienced, or we get into the mode of problem solving, or sink into despair when moments of sorrow befall. In any case, sadly, the real quest for untainted happiness goes unfulfilled.

Before we go on to solve the puzzle of Happiness, let us first understand what 'mind' is. Is it some object or organ, like the heart, the brain, or liver? Can a surgeon uncover the mind when they cut us open? Obviously, the mind is not any of these.

It is an energy (force/*shakti*) – a subtle but real energy that is one of the foundational layers that make up our chemistry. Simply put, the mind is nothing but thoughts. It is an energy that is inherent in all beings.

Mind is a creature of habits. Exploring this attribute will do wonders in our quest for Happiness.

Mind seldom accepts commands but the good news is that it can be influenced by routines. While the mind wants to go out in search of joy, it can also be trained to relish the journey within. The very aspect of the mind's nature to be a creature of habits needs to be used to silence it. That's the only strategy that can work.

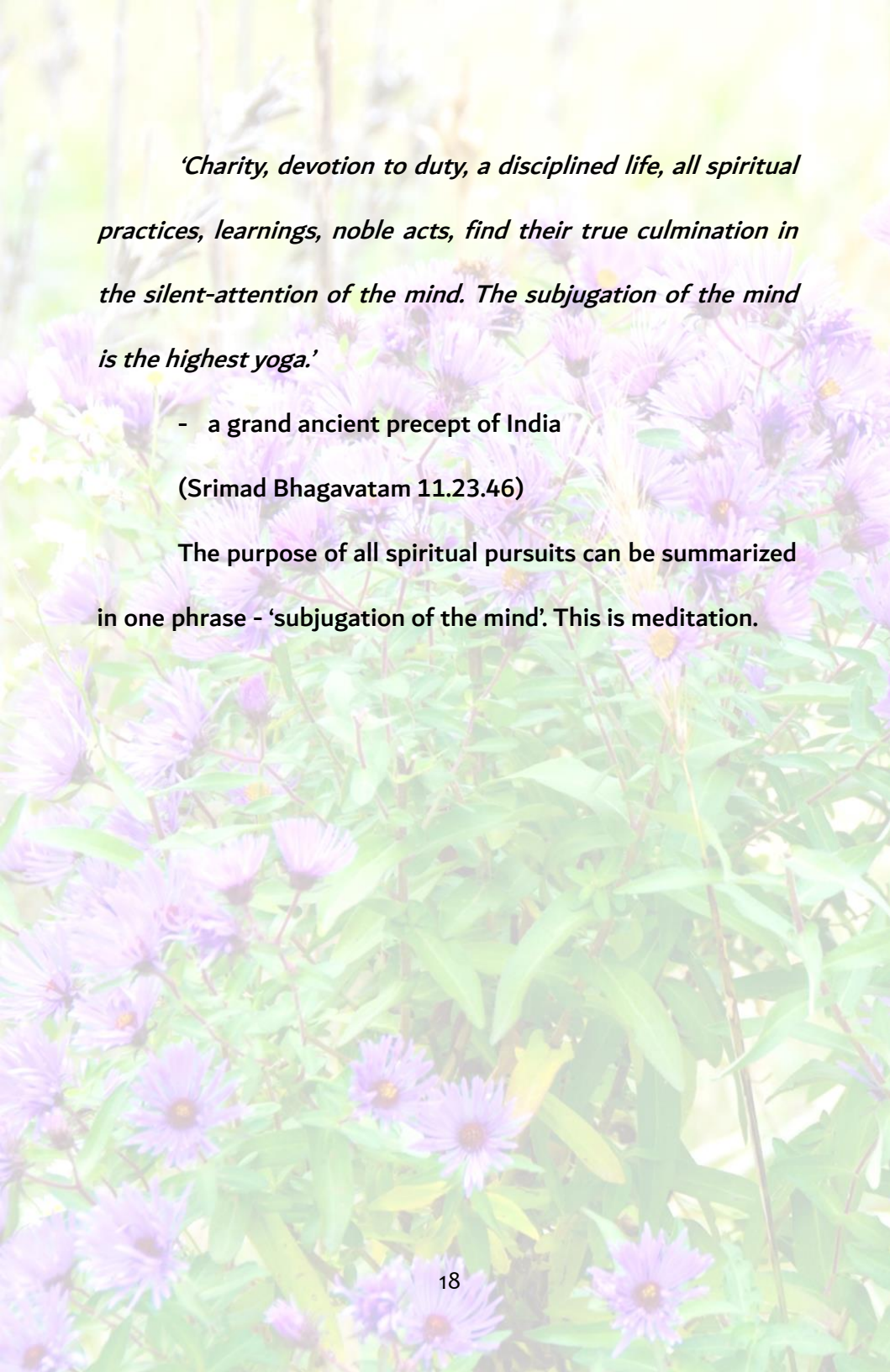
When we repeatedly do an activity at a certain time of the day, the mind craves for repetition of this pattern. It does not want to be disturbed of the routine, as boring as it sounds. Say we keep an alarm for 6 am every day to wake up. After a few days of religiously waking up to the alarm, it sets a pattern

pattern in the mind. This way the body automatically wakes up at 6 am even when the alarm is not set. Hence the power of habits is a gift too.

Don't we become a slave to habits that leave impressions that bind us? Addictions, from even seemingly petty things, like coffee, to dangerous ones like drugs all have one thing in common - the habit-forming nature of the mind!

It is this nature of the mind that we need to tap into. We need to gently train the mind to the state of attention, to silence the mind - implying reduction in the number of thoughts. The practice of habituating the mind to attention and silence is what we call as 'meditation'.

Any day, by default is a sunny day, isn't it? It is the clouds that make the day gloomy. Removing the clouds of thoughts reveals the sunny and bright nature of happiness - that we are. Gradually reducing the thoughts to a minimum is also meditation.



'Charity, devotion to duty, a disciplined life, all spiritual practices, learnings, noble acts, find their true culmination in the silent-attention of the mind. The subjugation of the mind is the highest yoga.'

- a grand ancient precept of India

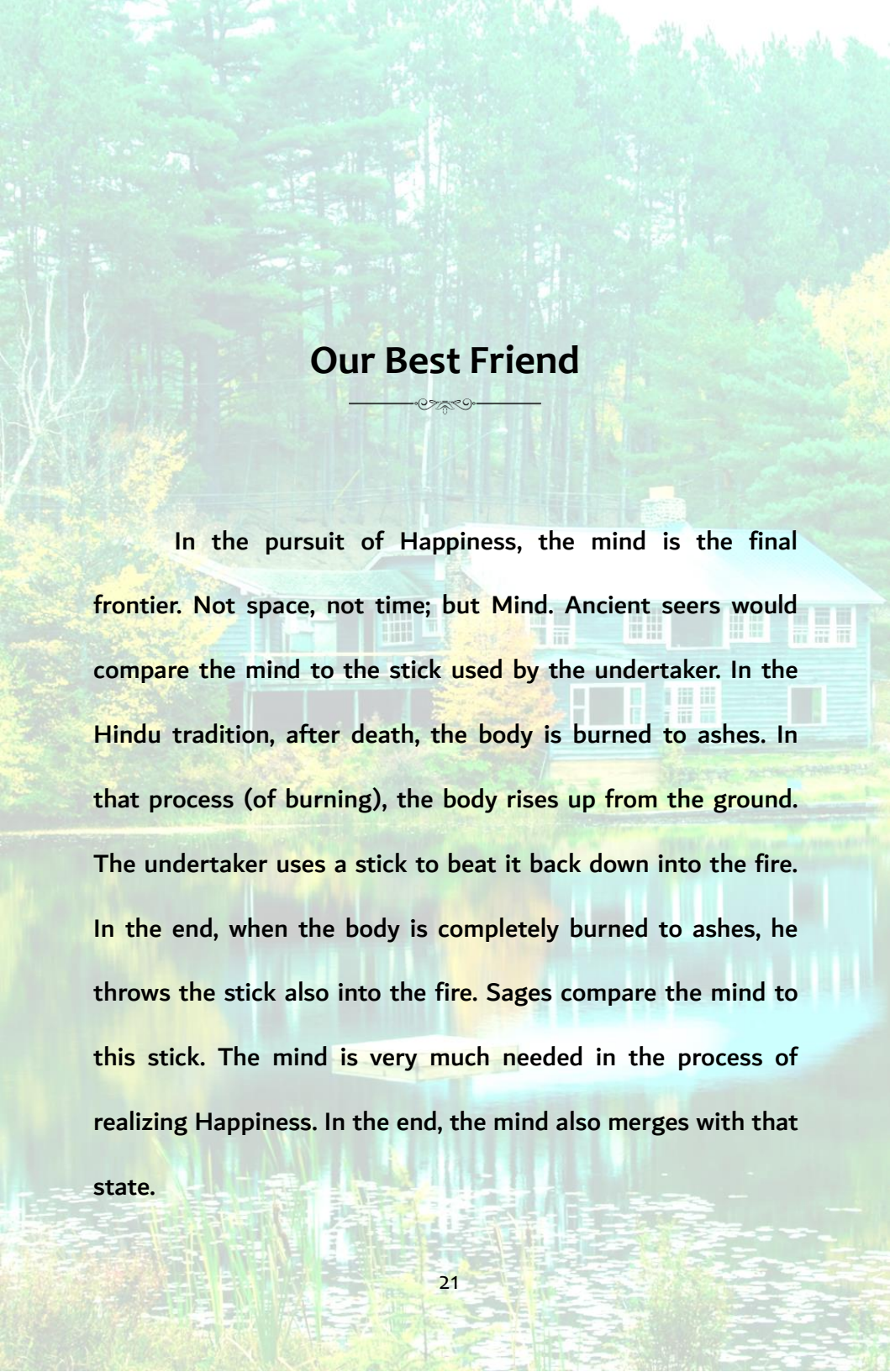
(Srimad Bhagavatam 11.23.46)

The purpose of all spiritual pursuits can be summarized in one phrase - 'subjugation of the mind'. This is meditation.



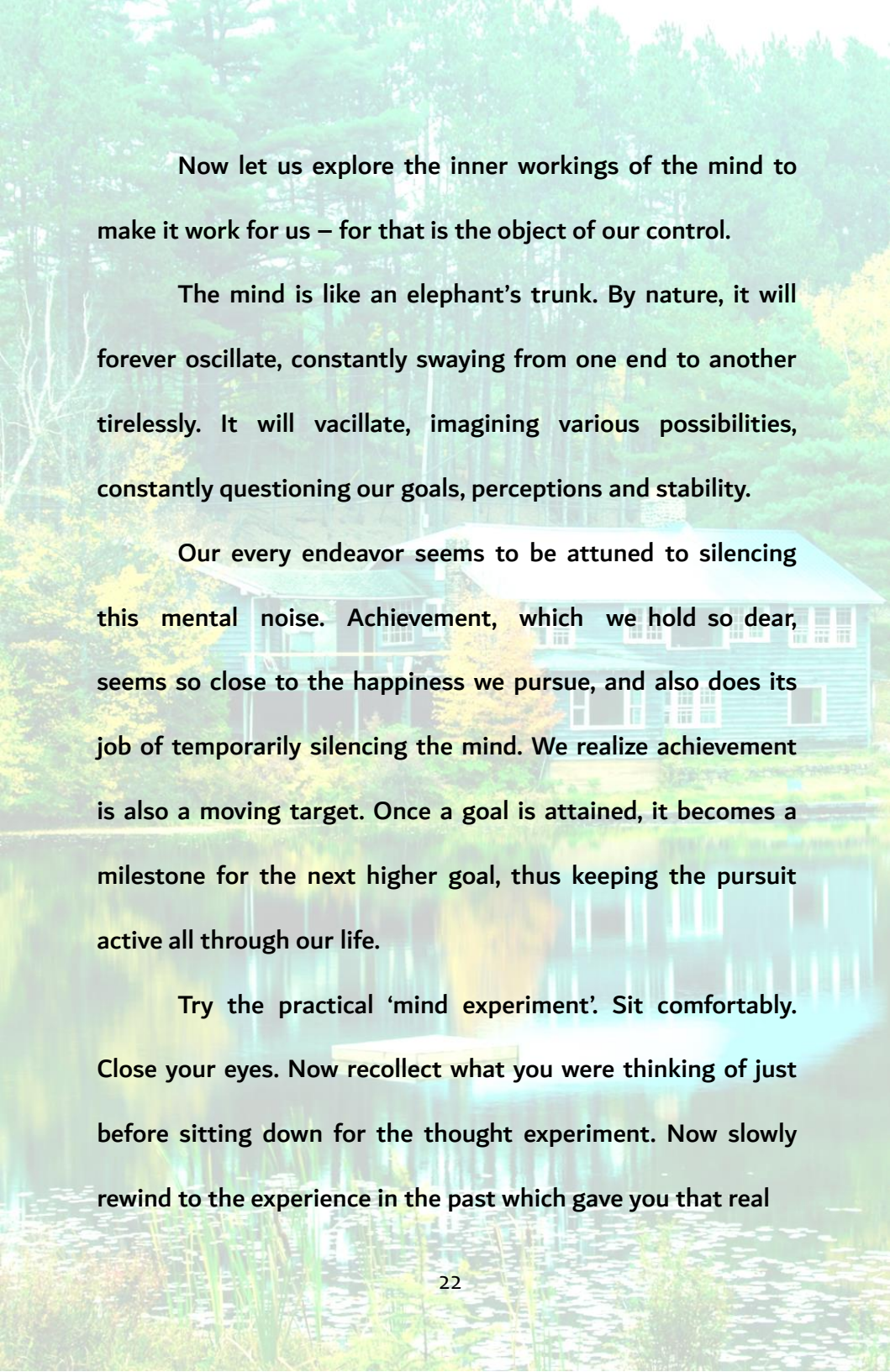
What we see outside
is merely a reflection of
what we are within.





Our Best Friend

In the pursuit of Happiness, the mind is the final frontier. Not space, not time; but Mind. Ancient seers would compare the mind to the stick used by the undertaker. In the Hindu tradition, after death, the body is burned to ashes. In that process (of burning), the body rises up from the ground. The undertaker uses a stick to beat it back down into the fire. In the end, when the body is completely burned to ashes, he throws the stick also into the fire. Sages compare the mind to this stick. The mind is very much needed in the process of realizing Happiness. In the end, the mind also merges with that state.

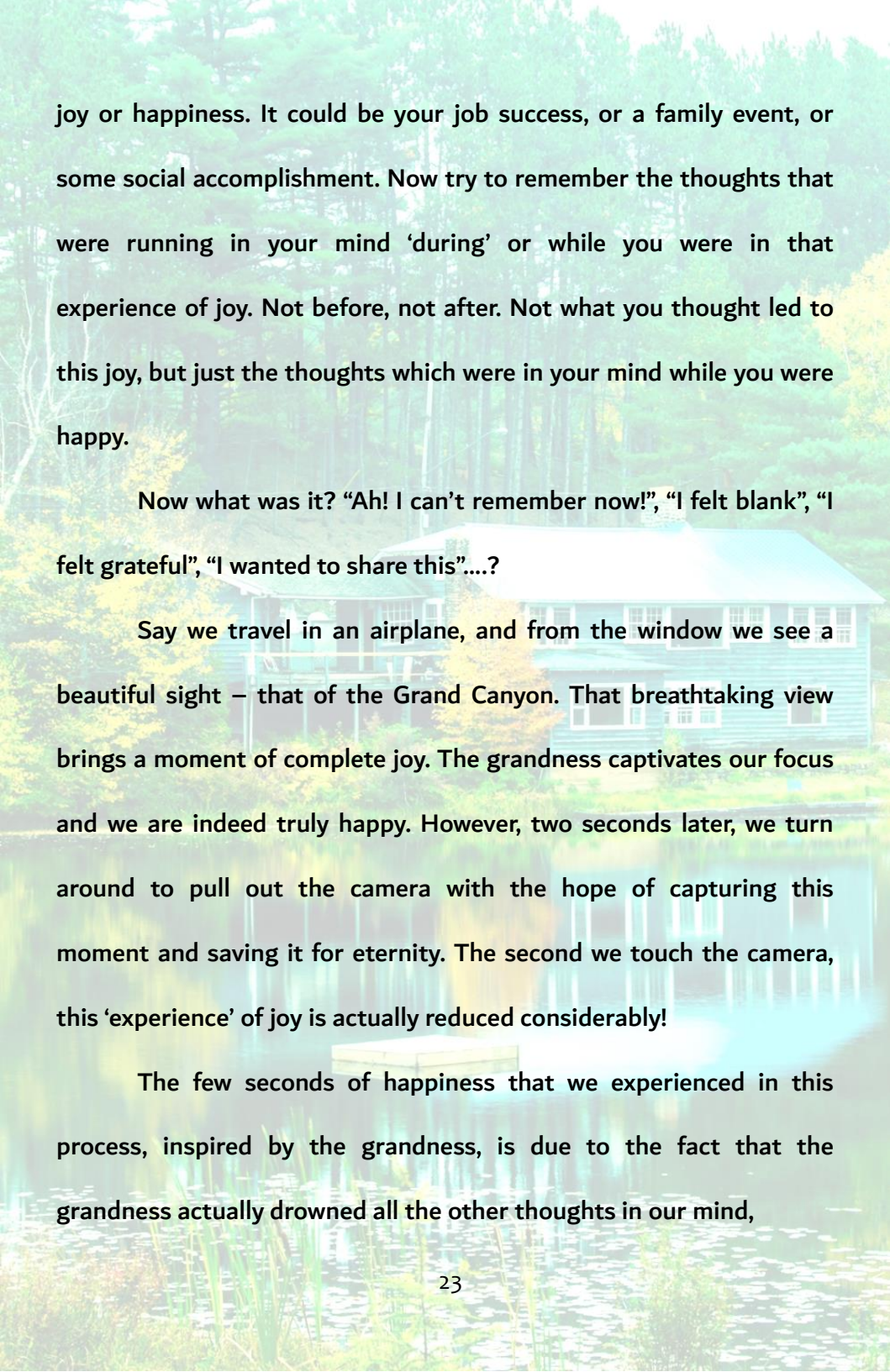


Now let us explore the inner workings of the mind to make it work for us – for that is the object of our control.

The mind is like an elephant's trunk. By nature, it will forever oscillate, constantly swaying from one end to another tirelessly. It will vacillate, imagining various possibilities, constantly questioning our goals, perceptions and stability.

Our every endeavor seems to be attuned to silencing this mental noise. Achievement, which we hold so dear, seems so close to the happiness we pursue, and also does its job of temporarily silencing the mind. We realize achievement is also a moving target. Once a goal is attained, it becomes a milestone for the next higher goal, thus keeping the pursuit active all through our life.

Try the practical 'mind experiment'. Sit comfortably. Close your eyes. Now recollect what you were thinking of just before sitting down for the thought experiment. Now slowly rewind to the experience in the past which gave you that real

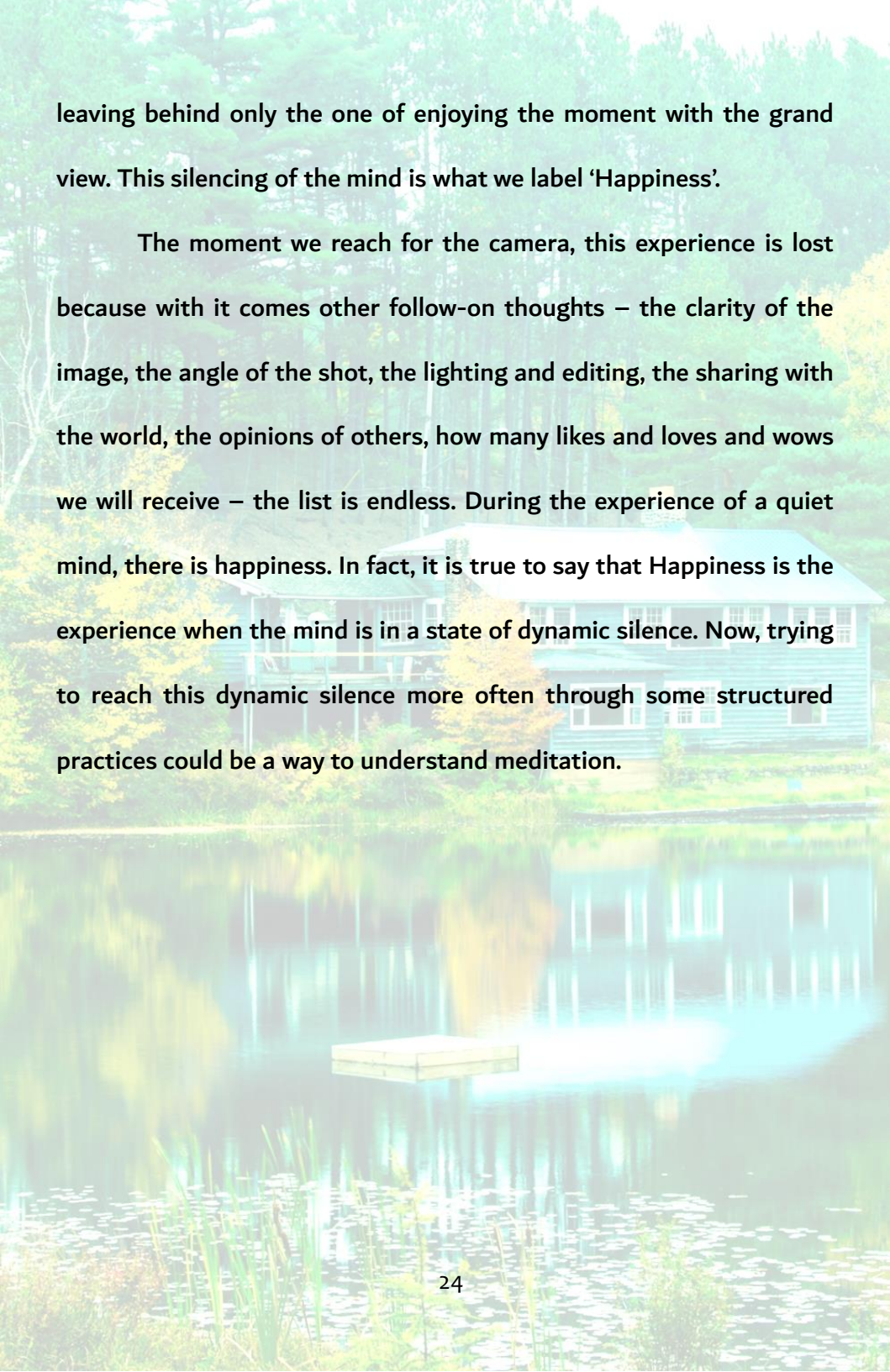


joy or happiness. It could be your job success, or a family event, or some social accomplishment. Now try to remember the thoughts that were running in your mind ‘during’ or while you were in that experience of joy. Not before, not after. Not what you thought led to this joy, but just the thoughts which were in your mind while you were happy.

Now what was it? “Ah! I can’t remember now!”, “I felt blank”, “I felt grateful”, “I wanted to share this”....?

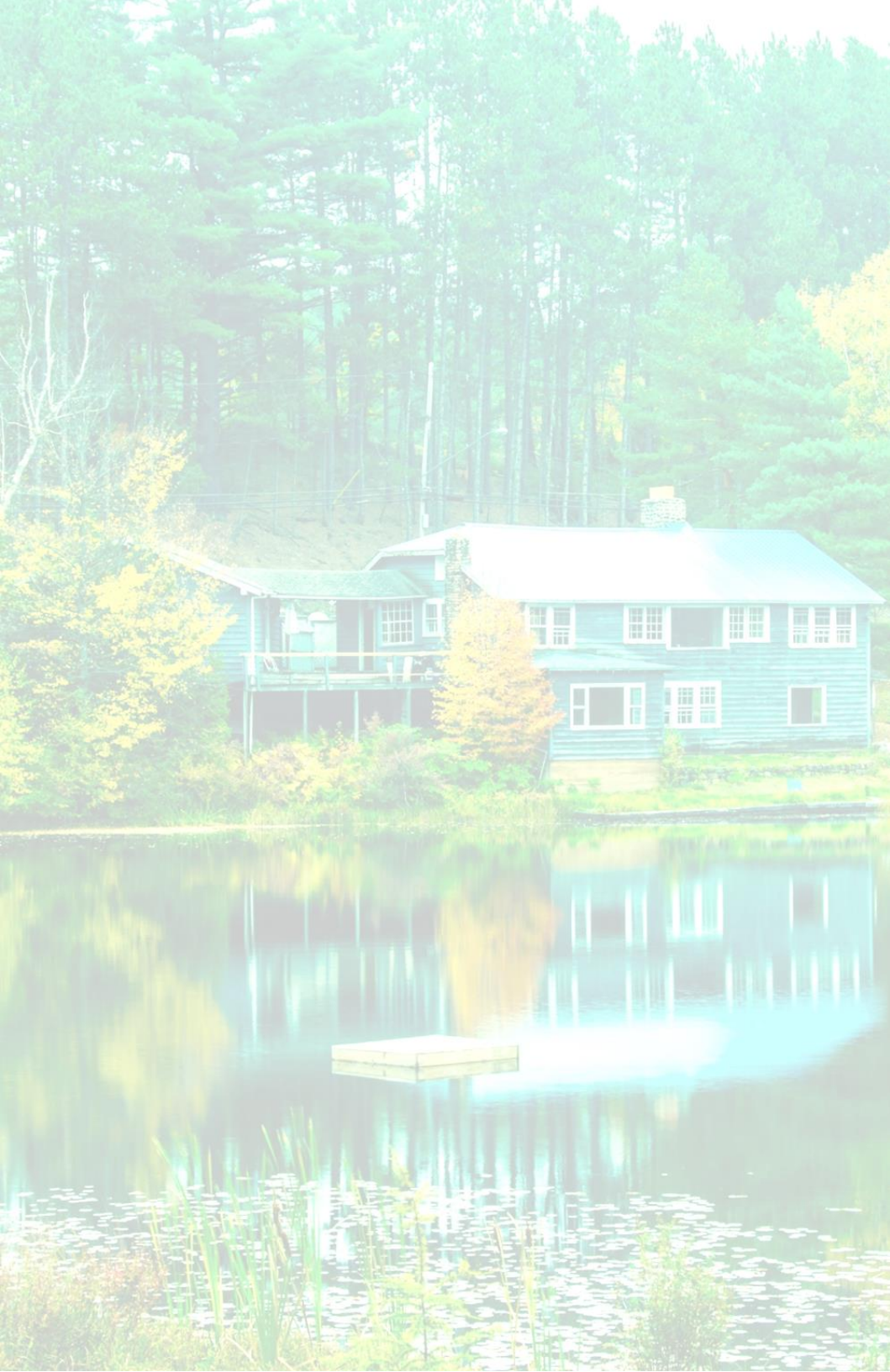
Say we travel in an airplane, and from the window we see a beautiful sight – that of the Grand Canyon. That breathtaking view brings a moment of complete joy. The grandness captivates our focus and we are indeed truly happy. However, two seconds later, we turn around to pull out the camera with the hope of capturing this moment and saving it for eternity. The second we touch the camera, this ‘experience’ of joy is actually reduced considerably!

The few seconds of happiness that we experienced in this process, inspired by the grandness, is due to the fact that the grandness actually drowned all the other thoughts in our mind,

A serene landscape featuring a two-story blue house with white trim and a porch, situated on a grassy bank. In the foreground, a calm pond reflects the house and the surrounding greenery. A small wooden dock extends into the water. The background is filled with lush green trees, creating a peaceful and natural setting.

leaving behind only the one of enjoying the moment with the grand view. This silencing of the mind is what we label 'Happiness'.

The moment we reach for the camera, this experience is lost because with it comes other follow-on thoughts – the clarity of the image, the angle of the shot, the lighting and editing, the sharing with the world, the opinions of others, how many likes and loves and wows we will receive – the list is endless. During the experience of a quiet mind, there is happiness. In fact, it is true to say that Happiness is the experience when the mind is in a state of dynamic silence. Now, trying to reach this dynamic silence more often through some structured practices could be a way to understand meditation.



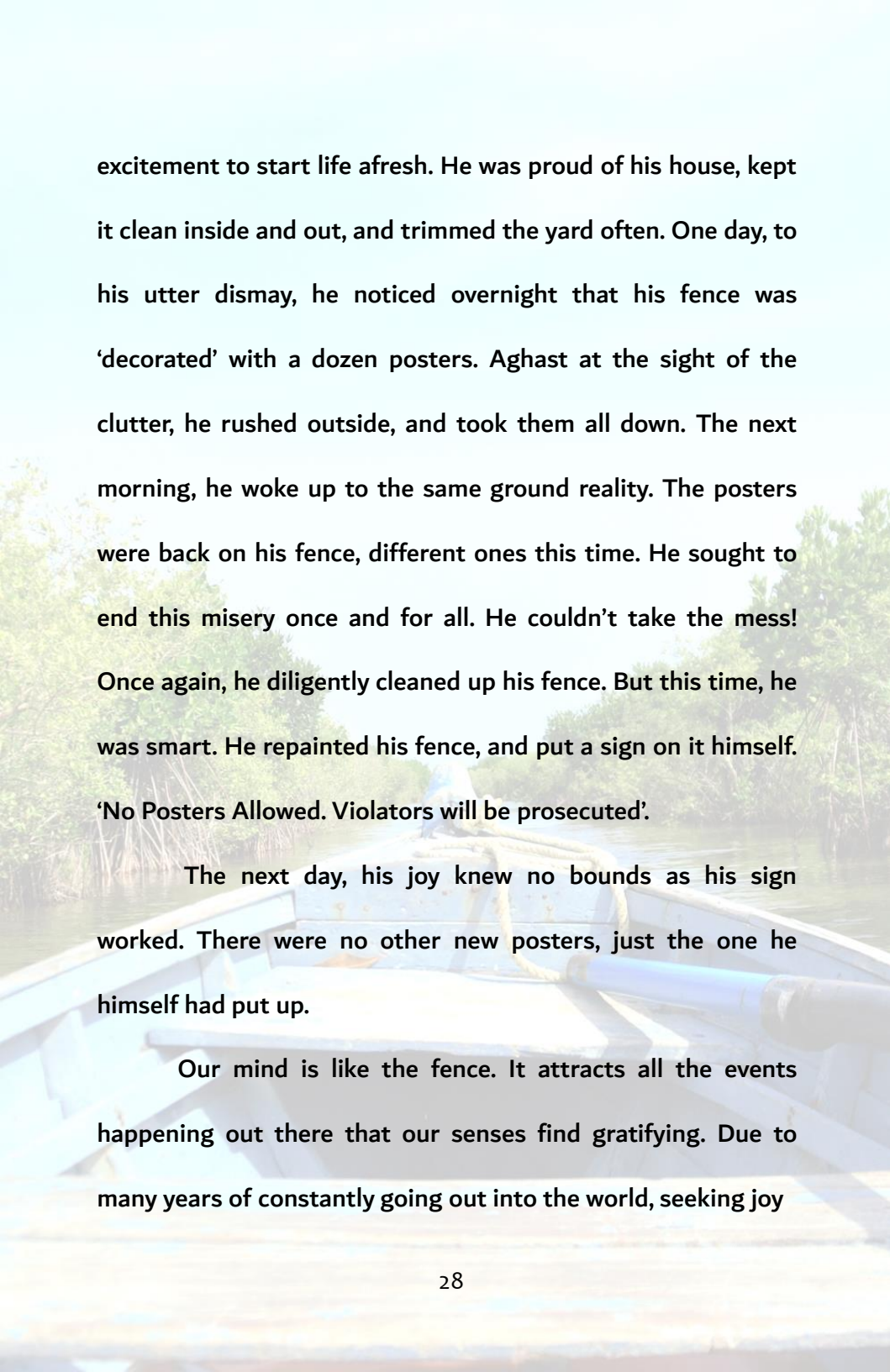
Happiness is the
experience when the
mind is in the state
of dynamic silence.



Meditation

The practice of meditation is to engage in contemplation; to focus our thoughts on something. A great saint, Sri Ramana Maharshi, says that *dhyana* (meditation) is holding on to a single thought and putting away all other thoughts. Meditation serves to bring in the state of attention of the mind. Let us understand the practice of meditation with a simple example.

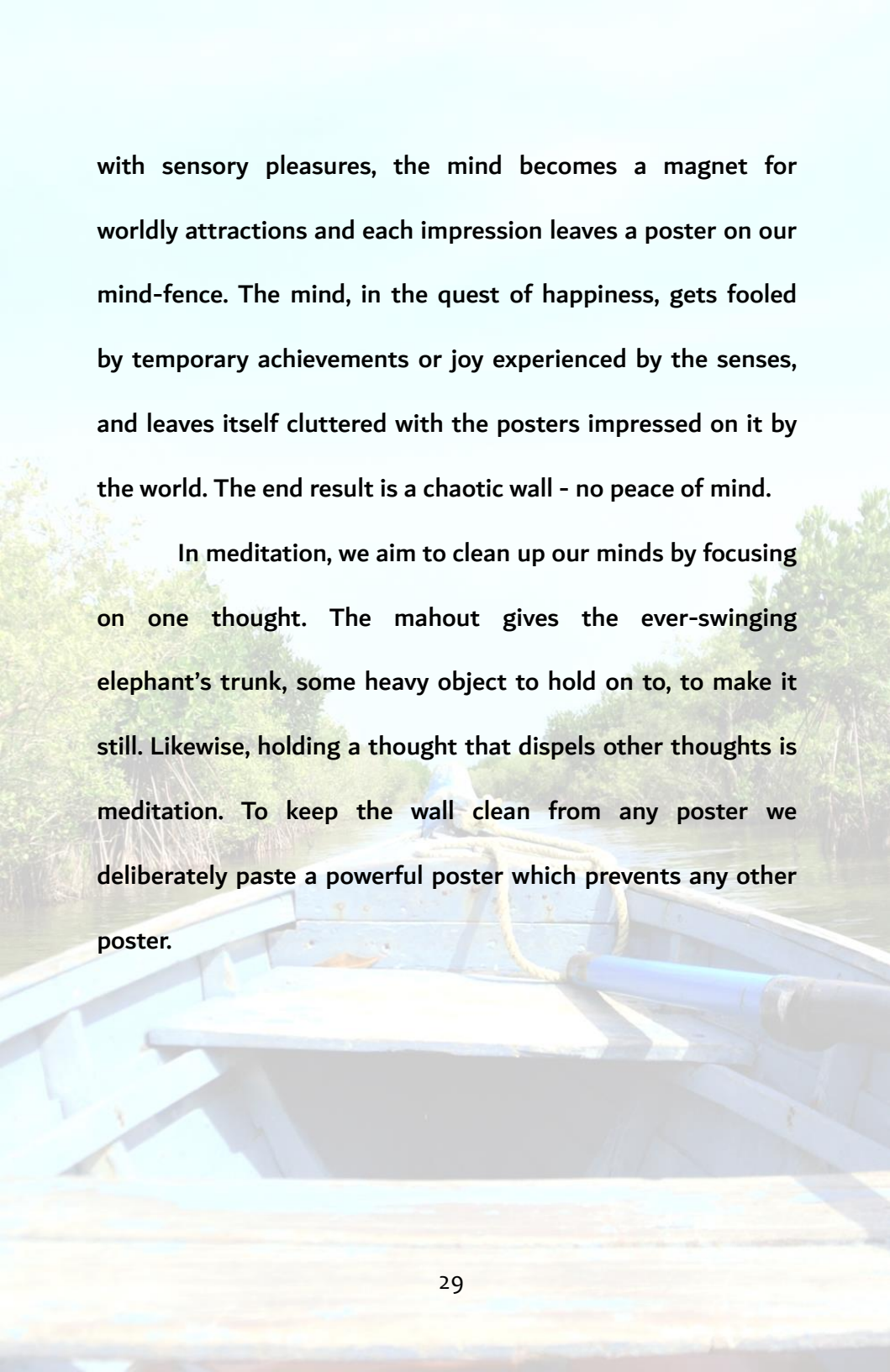
It is a common sight to see posters with advertisements on the roadside walls and fences in India. Different posters showcasing movies, political rallies, campaigns, major events, and what not! A person moved into a neighborhood with all



excitement to start life afresh. He was proud of his house, kept it clean inside and out, and trimmed the yard often. One day, to his utter dismay, he noticed overnight that his fence was 'decorated' with a dozen posters. Aghast at the sight of the clutter, he rushed outside, and took them all down. The next morning, he woke up to the same ground reality. The posters were back on his fence, different ones this time. He sought to end this misery once and for all. He couldn't take the mess! Once again, he diligently cleaned up his fence. But this time, he was smart. He repainted his fence, and put a sign on it himself. 'No Posters Allowed. Violators will be prosecuted'.

The next day, his joy knew no bounds as his sign worked. There were no other new posters, just the one he himself had put up.

Our mind is like the fence. It attracts all the events happening out there that our senses find gratifying. Due to many years of constantly going out into the world, seeking joy



with sensory pleasures, the mind becomes a magnet for worldly attractions and each impression leaves a poster on our mind-fence. The mind, in the quest of happiness, gets fooled by temporary achievements or joy experienced by the senses, and leaves itself cluttered with the posters impressed on it by the world. The end result is a chaotic wall - no peace of mind.

In meditation, we aim to clean up our minds by focusing on one thought. The mahout gives the ever-swinging elephant's trunk, some heavy object to hold on to, to make it still. Likewise, holding a thought that dispels other thoughts is meditation. To keep the wall clean from any poster we deliberately paste a powerful poster which prevents any other poster.



Like the flight of a bird
in the vast expanse of the sky,
truth can also be seen
as a pathless land.

Preparation

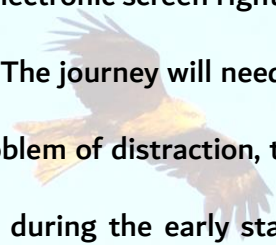
In the journey to calm this mind, the surrounding ambience is a great enabler. Various factors affect our mind. The food, the breath, and our observing the mind innately contribute to a healthy mind, and hence aid in the journey.

‘A part of what we eat becomes the mind’, say the great ones. Hence continence in our food habits greatly aids our journey of meditation.

Similarly, breath control is also an important factor that influences the mind. Within us, the origin of the mind and the origin of breath are in the same place, say the wise yogis. When we control the mind, the breath is automatically controlled. Similarly, when we control our breathing, the mind follows suit.

The third factor is - observing our mind.

The mind is a great magnet for distractions. And if there is one thing in abundance these days, it is that! How times have changed drastically right in front of our eyes in the past 10 years? Nowadays we can barely find anyone in the world who is not staring nonstop into their phone or some handheld device. The mind loves to have control over us and it has found the easiest way to do that, at the touch of a button on an electronic screen right in our palms.



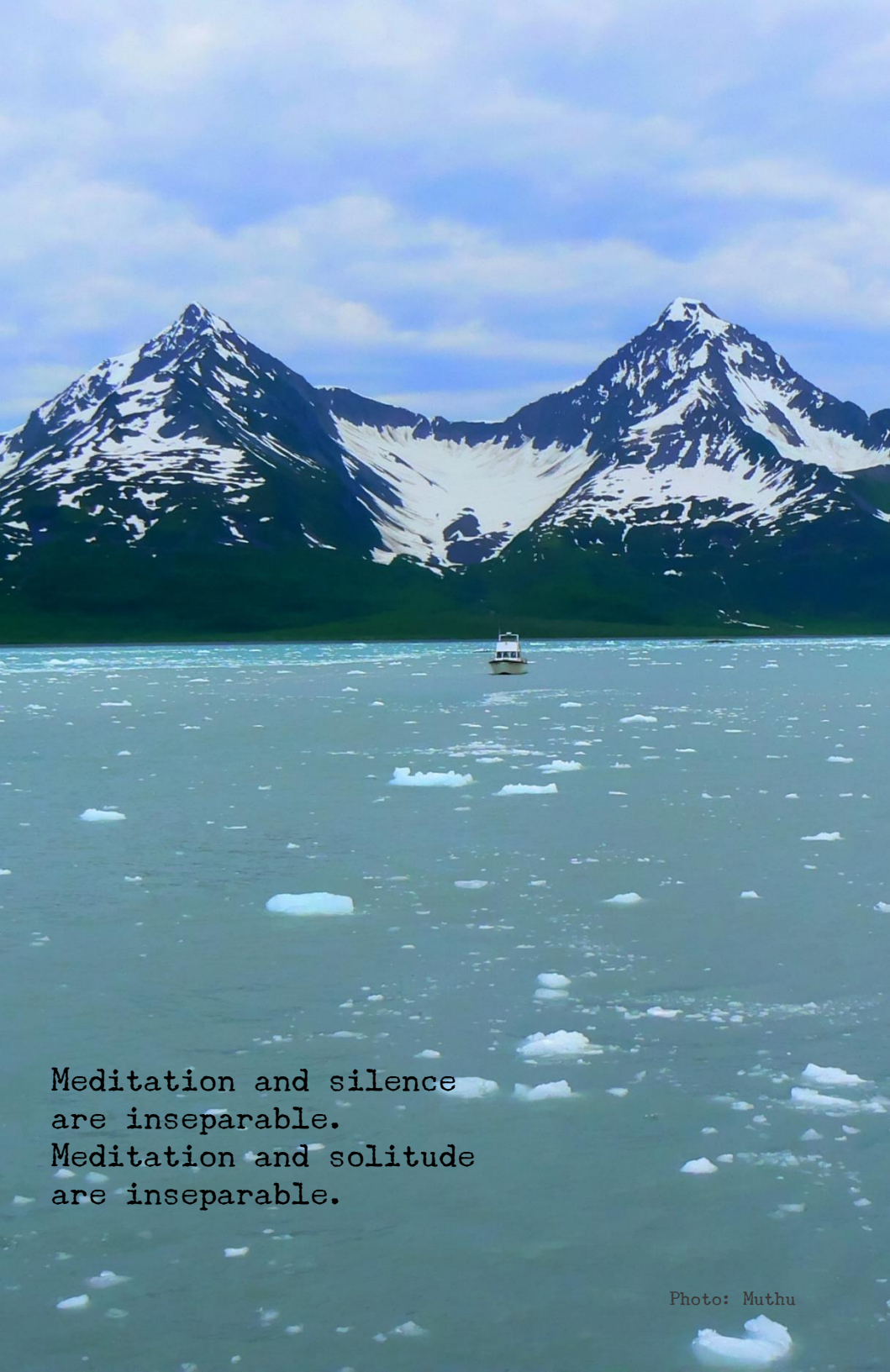
The journey will need to transcend from being aware of the problem of distraction, to consciously distancing ourselves from it during the early stages of meditation, and moving to being completely unaware of the distraction as we mature in the path.

Boredom is a common experience for all of us, isn't it? We experience moments when we look for distractions. We turn the TV on and even there, we are unable to hold the

remote in one channel for long. A weak mind fatigued by constancy, pushes the 'I'm bored' button inside the mind, and on the outside we operate the remote control to switch the channel. Two minutes in, the process repeats. Thirty minutes later, we drop the TV and open a book. The journey continues on and on. Why is that? It's simply because we are unable to enjoy being with ourselves. We seek the company of distractions to solve boredom.

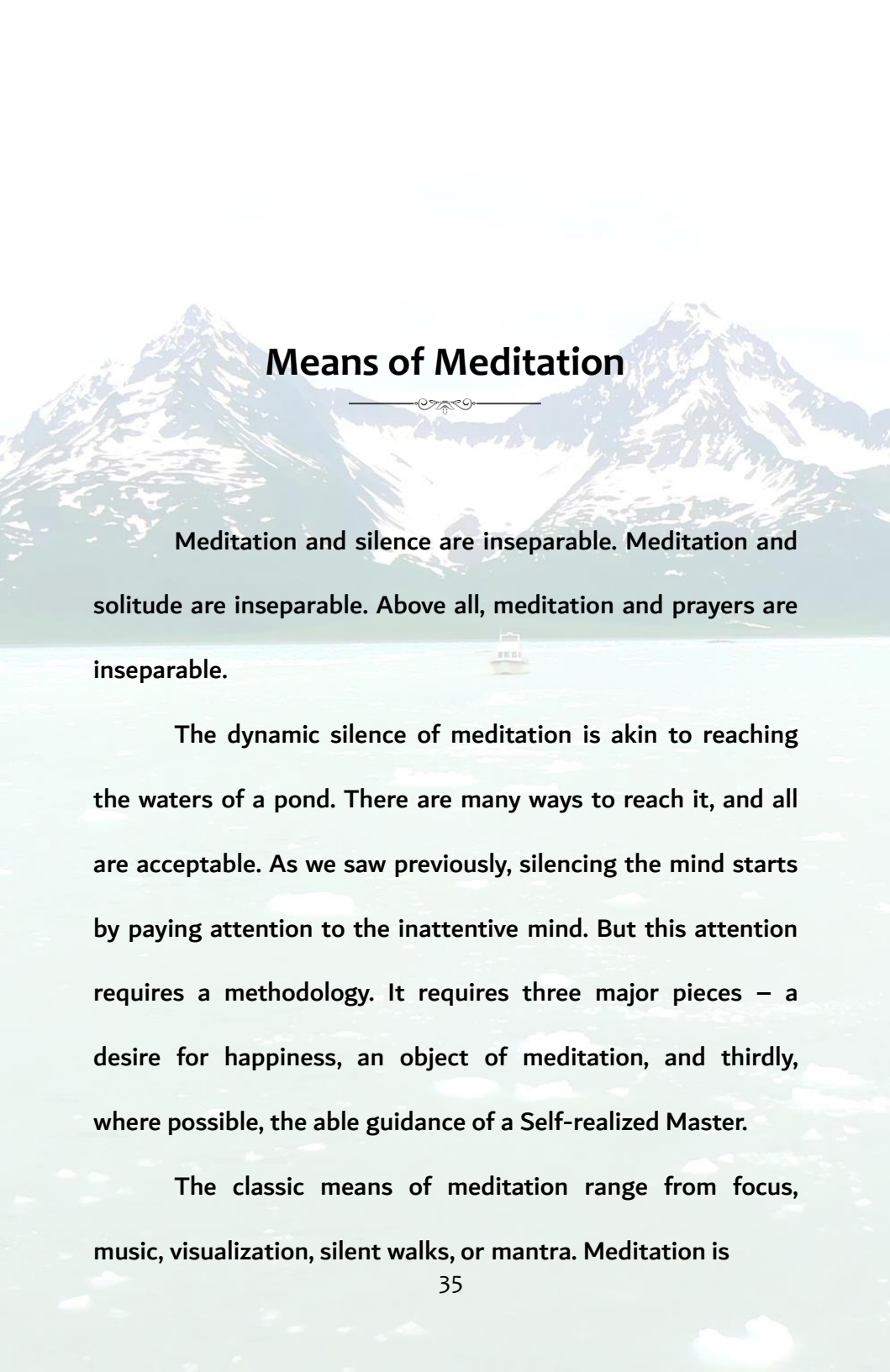
Don't fight boredom. Rather introspect the bored mind. In this observation, the mind is bored no more. Can a corrupt double agent be punished with a bribe? That's how silly it is to indulge in activities that offer temporary joy to the mind. Boredom is a blessing that gives us an insight into the mind's nature of trying to sell us into another distraction. Quietly observing the mind will kill that boredom.

A critical tool for us in the journey of Happiness is observing the mind. There is a great power in mere observation, which has also been proven scientifically.



Meditation and silence
are inseparable.
Meditation and solitude
are inseparable.

Photo: Muthu

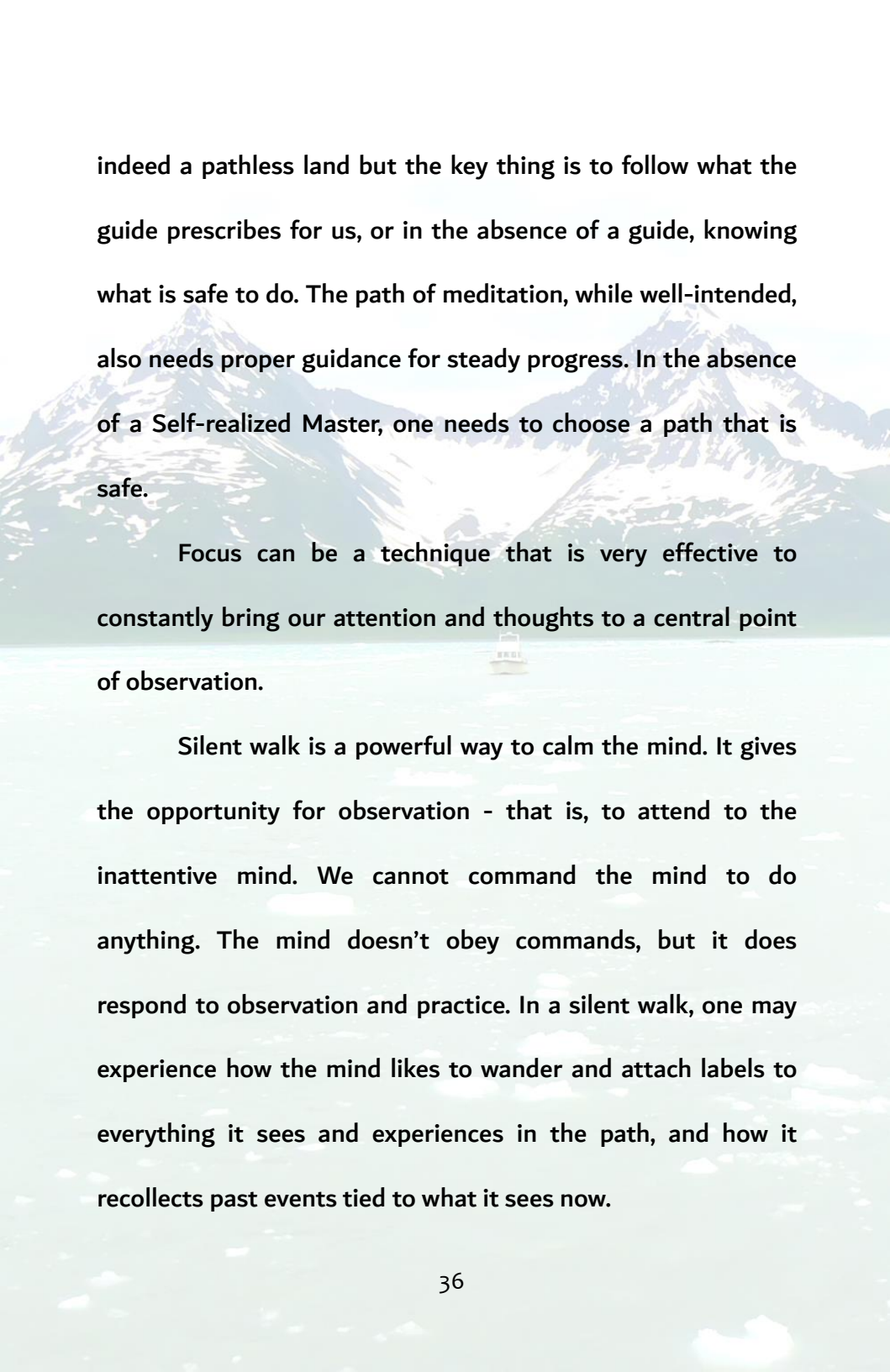


Means of Meditation

Meditation and silence are inseparable. Meditation and solitude are inseparable. Above all, meditation and prayers are inseparable.

The dynamic silence of meditation is akin to reaching the waters of a pond. There are many ways to reach it, and all are acceptable. As we saw previously, silencing the mind starts by paying attention to the inattentive mind. But this attention requires a methodology. It requires three major pieces – a desire for happiness, an object of meditation, and thirdly, where possible, the able guidance of a Self-realized Master.

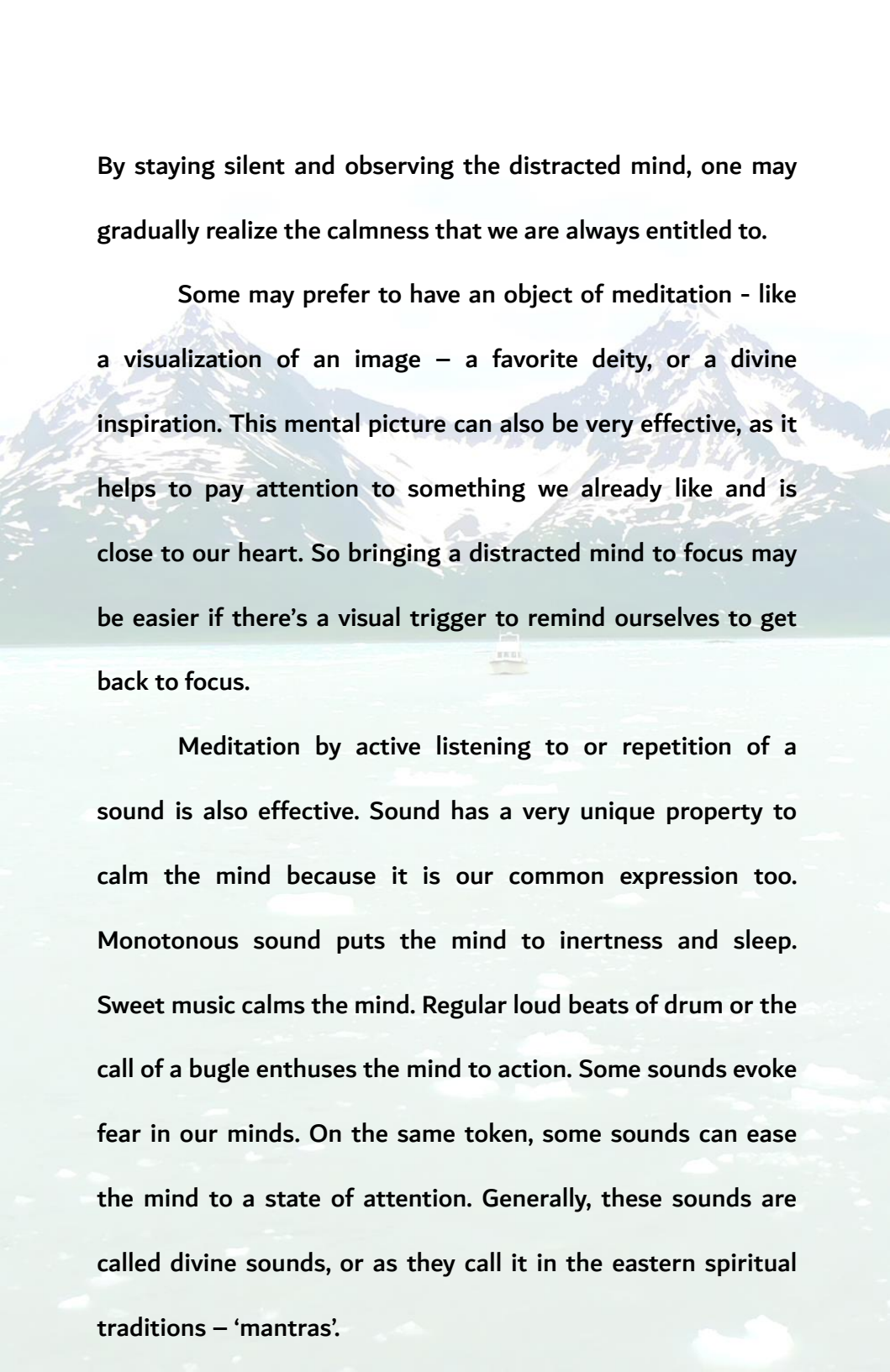
The classic means of meditation range from focus, music, visualization, silent walks, or mantra. Meditation is



indeed a pathless land but the key thing is to follow what the guide prescribes for us, or in the absence of a guide, knowing what is safe to do. The path of meditation, while well-intended, also needs proper guidance for steady progress. In the absence of a Self-realized Master, one needs to choose a path that is safe.

Focus can be a technique that is very effective to constantly bring our attention and thoughts to a central point of observation.

Silent walk is a powerful way to calm the mind. It gives the opportunity for observation - that is, to attend to the inattentive mind. We cannot command the mind to do anything. The mind doesn't obey commands, but it does respond to observation and practice. In a silent walk, one may experience how the mind likes to wander and attach labels to everything it sees and experiences in the path, and how it recollects past events tied to what it sees now.

A serene landscape with snow-capped mountains in the background and a small boat on a calm lake in the foreground. The scene is peaceful and serves as a backdrop for the text.

By staying silent and observing the distracted mind, one may gradually realize the calmness that we are always entitled to.

Some may prefer to have an object of meditation - like a visualization of an image – a favorite deity, or a divine inspiration. This mental picture can also be very effective, as it helps to pay attention to something we already like and is close to our heart. So bringing a distracted mind to focus may be easier if there's a visual trigger to remind ourselves to get back to focus.

Meditation by active listening to or repetition of a sound is also effective. Sound has a very unique property to calm the mind because it is our common expression too. Monotonous sound puts the mind to inertness and sleep. Sweet music calms the mind. Regular loud beats of drum or the call of a bugle enthralls the mind to action. Some sounds evoke fear in our minds. On the same token, some sounds can ease the mind to a state of attention. Generally, these sounds are called divine sounds, or as they call it in the eastern spiritual traditions – ‘mantras’.

A low-angle photograph looking up from the bottom of a narrow canyon. Two massive, reddish-brown rock walls rise steeply on either side, their surfaces textured with shadows and highlights. At the top center, where the two walls meet, a bright sunburst of light radiates outwards, creating a star-like effect with multiple rays. The sky above the opening is a clear, vibrant blue. The overall color palette is dominated by the warm, earthy tones of the rock and the cool blue of the sky.

'Rama' also means
'the self effulgent source of all power'.

Photo: Prabhakar Subrahmanyam

Mahamantra

Meditating with a sound is best aided by the repetition of a particular sound, also called a Mantra. The word mantra is derived from Sanskrit and expands as '*mananAt-trAyate iti mantrah*' – by the constant repetition of which one is protected from negativity.

In the timeless eastern philosophy, the sages and seers of yesteryears engaged themselves in deep meditation for years at a time. It is hard for us now to fathom this fact but the reality is that such sages exist even today and that gives us confidence in the path seen by them. Those seers, in their quest for Realization, attained that peaceful state of oneness and thankfully wrote down their experiences of what they saw.

The brilliant radiance of unending bliss shines through in all glory, and in that grandness, the Divine Name—the Mahamantra—sparkles. Upon constant repetition of this mantra, we can bring our self to that state of oneness and bliss.

Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare

This mantra is the Mahamantra, meaning the Great Mantra. All means of meditation are great, no doubt. They all take us to the same destination. However, one of the most effective paths for all to follow in the current day and age is Mahamantra Meditation.

This mantra is tested by time. Over many centuries, people have chanted this mantra and ascended to the greatest heights of Happiness and Love.

Like science and medicine transcend all spiritual

denominations, so does this path of Mantra Meditation. The Mantra contains the Divine Name – pregnant with the power to annihilate all conflicts of the mind and reveal to ourselves the true nature of our Self.

The Mahamantra removes the negativity in us, brings joy, and attracts positive divine love. Each of the 16 Divine Names in the Mahamantra, in the most ancient language (language of the gods) known to mankind, has a unique meaning and power:

Hare: Removes the duality of Joy and Sorrow.

Rama: Takes us to the true state of perennial Happiness.

Hare: Removes all negativity.

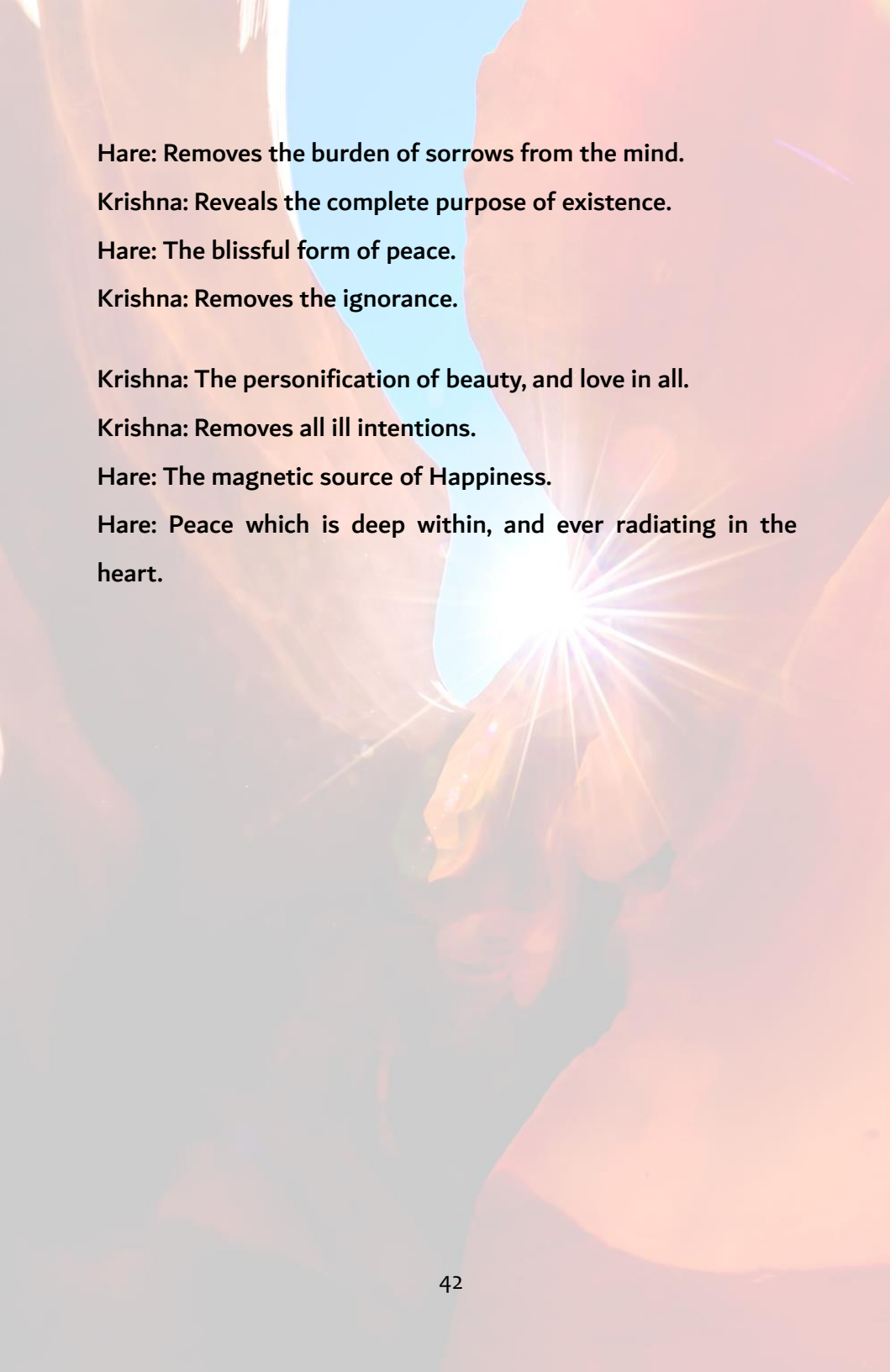
Rama: Makes life a celebration.

Rama: The self-effulgent source of power.

Rama: The provider of happiness of divine wealth.

Hare: The happiness that is beyond that of the body.

Hare: Annihilates all the impurities within the mind.



Hare: Removes the burden of sorrows from the mind.

Krishna: Reveals the complete purpose of existence.

Hare: The blissful form of peace.

Krishna: Removes the ignorance.

Krishna: The personification of beauty, and love in all.

Krishna: Removes all ill intentions.

Hare: The magnetic source of Happiness.

Hare: Peace which is deep within, and ever radiating in the heart.

When the path is right,
the destination is sure to come!



Photo: Muthu

How?

In eastern spiritual traditions, there are many chants and mantras, and these have very strict rules to be adhered to; for otherwise, the results are said to even be counter-productive, because sounds have a deep influence on the mind. But there is one exception. The Mahamantra. It has absolutely no rules. It needs no formal initiation. Anyone and everyone can chant it and derive the benefits, for it is as primal a need for humans as air.

There is no need to change anything in our current lives to follow the path of Mahamantra meditation. We can continue our current lifestyle, at home, at work, with friends, and the society.

There is no need to change our attire or food habits. There is no need to change our affiliation to any spiritual denomination. This path gives the space for any worship, or type of belief, or none at all. Be true to your path and faith, and chant the Mahamantra.

The highest state is to chant Mahamantra always, effortlessly. The mind however needs to be slowly trained to repeat the mantra and dwell in the experience of chanting. Over time, by the power of repetition and the power of the mantra, the chanting will become effortless. Slowly but surely, the chanting will begin the mind-silencing job without any other mental effort. The transformation journey shall happen naturally, leading one to Happiness. Some see this phenomenon as divine grace at work.

Internalizing the chanting helps to bring in the focus gradually. Chant out aloud 6 times, followed by simply moving your lips to the mantra thrice, and followed by thinking the mantra in the mind twice.

Repeating this 6-3-2 meditation cycle a few times over and over again gradually internalizes the chanting.

When we want to limit a pet's surroundings and control it, we first guard the outer periphery of the house, don't we? We secure the fence first. Then we confine it to the house, then to a room and finally in its kennel, isn't it? Likewise, the mind wanders out a lot, and so we chant out aloud using all the senses. Gradually, we internalize it by only using a few senses, and finally by only thinking in the mind, we bring the attention to the one pointed focus in the mind. When thoughts abide in its source, it is the state of love – joy!

The mind is at our disposal to use its energy and attend to any endeavor we please - social, professional, or spiritual.



Mahamantra meditation is
a sweet, simple and practical path
to true well-being.

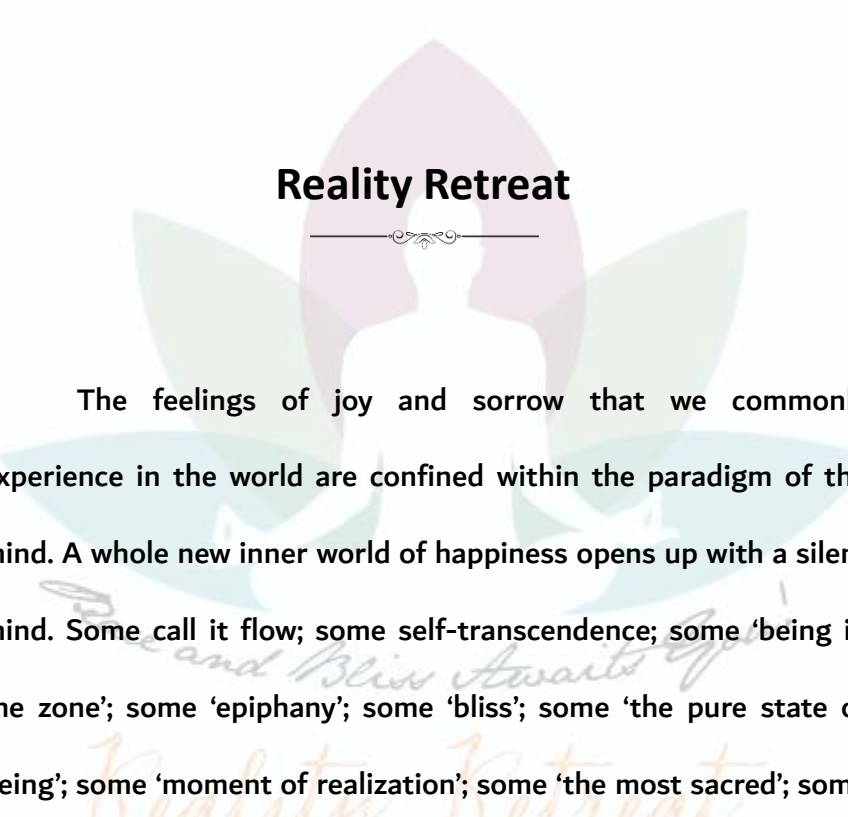
Photo: Muthu



Peace and Bliss Awaits You!

Reality Retreat

MEDITATION



Reality Retreat

The feelings of joy and sorrow that we commonly experience in the world are confined within the paradigm of the mind. A whole new inner world of happiness opens up with a silent mind. Some call it flow; some self-transcendence; some 'being in the zone'; some 'epiphany'; some 'bliss'; some 'the pure state of being'; some 'moment of realization'; some 'the most sacred'; some 'state of pure awareness'; some 'I am that I am' state.

Names and labels apart, this experience of dynamic silence is a state that passes all human intellectual understanding.

Constant repetition of this Mahamantra will lead us back to that Reality. Imagine a man who is asleep and dreaming of a war zone. He does not wake up to even the deafening noise that

originates in that dream state, but even a soft alarm in the 'real' world wakes him up from the dream world and transports him to the real world. Normal sounds cannot transport us anywhere beyond this region that is confined to the reaches of the senses. The sound needs to come from the plane of pure awareness to wake us up and take us back to that Reality.

Reality Retreat Meditation is one where we retreat back to Reality (our true self, the inner most) through the constant repetition of the Divine Mahamantra - the sound from the Happiness plane.

This sound will pave the way for the dynamic silence of the mind, and that will make our life a true, joyous lyric.

Welcome to this new hitherto unexplored world of dynamic silence.



His Holiness Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji, who lives in Chennai, India, is a philosopher and spiritual preceptor who practices and propagates the practical aspects of Indian spirituality.

His message is that real happiness is within one's own self and that inner peace and tranquillity will naturally lead to universal brotherhood and harmony. Realization of this truth in this age of haste and hurry is as much possible and practicable as it was in earlier ages, and can be attained by simple but sustained practices that include mind control and chanting of the Mahamantra.

Sri Swamiji inspires in everyone a spirit of universal acceptance coupled with intense faith and steadfast devotion on the spiritual path.