

Mountain Meditation

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Allowing your eyes to close gently as you bring your attention to the flow of your breathing. Feeling each inbreath and each outbreath. Just observing your breathing without trying to change it or regulate it in any way, allowing the body to be still and sitting with a sense of dignity, a sense of resolve, a sense of being complete, whole, in this very moment, with your posture reflecting this sense of wholeness...

And as you sit here, picturing in your mind's eye, as best you can, the most beautiful mountain you know or have seen, or can imagine, just holding the image and feeling of this mountain in your mind's eye, letting it gradually come into greater focus...

Observing its overall shape, lofty peak high in the sky, the large base rooted in the rock of the earth's crust, its steep or gently sloping sides...

Noticing how massive it is, how solid, how unmoving, how beautiful, both from afar and up close...

Perhaps your mountain has snow at the top and trees on the lower slopes. Perhaps it has one prominent peak, perhaps a series of peaks, or a high plateau...

Observing it, noting its qualities and when you feel ready to, seeing if you can bring the mountain into your own body so that your body sitting here and the mountain in your mind's eye become one so that as you sit here, you share in the massiveness and the stillness and majesty of the mountain, you become the mountain

Rooted in the sitting posture, your head becomes the lofty peak, supported by the rest of the body and affording a panoramic vista. Your shoulders and arms the sides of the mountain. Your buttocks and legs the solid base, rooted to your cushion or your chair, experiencing in your body a sense of uplift from deep within your pelvis and spine.

With each breath, as you continue sitting, becoming a little more a breathing mountain, unwavering in your stillness, completely what you are, beyond words and thought, a centered, unmoving, rooted presence...

As you sit here, becoming aware of the fact that as the sun travels across the sky, the light and shadows and colors are changing virtually moment by moment in the mountain's granite stillness.

Night follows day and day follows night. The canopy of stars, the moon, then the sun. Through it all, the mountain just sits, experiencing change in each moment, constantly changing, yet always just being itself. It remains still as the seasons flow into one another and as the weather changes moment by moment and day by day, calmness abiding all change...

In summer, there is no snow on the mountain except perhaps for the very peaks or in crags shielded from direct sunlight.

In the fall, the mountain may wear a coat of brilliant fire colors.

In winter, a blanket of snow and ice.

In any season, it may find itself at times enshrouded in clouds or fog or pelted by freezing rain. People may come to see the mountain and comment on how beautiful it is or how it's not a good day to see the mountain, that it's too cloudy or rainy or foggy or dark.

None of this matters to the mountain, which remains at all times its essential self. Clouds may come and clouds may go, tourists may like it or not. The mountain's magnificence and beauty are not changed one bit by whether people see it or not, seen or unseen, in sun or clouds, broiling or frigid, day or night.

It just sits, being itself.

At times visited by violent storms, buffeted by snow and rain and winds of unspeakable magnitude.

Through it all, the mountain sits.

Spring comes, the birds sing in the trees once again. Leaves return, flowers bloom in the high meadows and on the slopes. Streams overflow with the waters of melting snow. Through it all, the mountain continues to sit, unmoved by the weather, what happens on the surface, by the world of appearances...

In the same way, as we sit in meditation, we can learn to experience the mountain, we can embody the same unwavering stillness and rootedness in the face of everything that changes in our own lives, over seconds, over hours, over years.

In our lives and in our meditation practice, we experience constantly the changing nature of mind and body and of the outer world, we have our own periods of light and darkness, our moments of color and our moments of drabness.

Certainly, we experience storms of varying intensity and violence in the outer world and in our own minds and bodies, buffeted by high winds, by cold and rain, we endure periods of darkness and pain, as well as the moments of joy and uplift, even our appearance changes constantly, experiencing a weather of its own...

By becoming the mountain in our meditation practice, we can link up with its strength and stability and adopt them for our own. We can use its energies to support our energy to encounter each moment with mindfulness and equanimity and clarity.

It may help us to see that our thoughts and feelings, our preoccupations, our emotional storms and cries, even the things that happen to us are very much like the weather on the mountain, we tend to take it all personally, but its strongest characteristic is impersonal.

The weather of our own lives is not to be ignored or denied, it is to be encountered, honored, felt, known for what it is, and held in awareness... And in holding it in this way, we come to know a deeper silence and stillness and wisdom.

Mountains have this to teach us and much more if we can come to listen...

So if you find you resonate in some way with the strength and stability of the mountain in the sitting, it may be helpful to use it from time to time in your meditation practice, to remind you of what it means to sit mindfully with resolve and wakefulness, in true stillness...

So, in the time that remains, continuing to sustain the mountain meditation on your own, in silence, moment by moment, until you hear the sound of the bells...