



spiritual philosophy spiritual philosophy spiritual philosophy

seeking stillness in our busy lives

Stepping into silence, Sharon Henshall discovers a mind as hectic as her city life.

For many of us, thoughts continuously overload our minds. We are constantly distracted by internal and external noise. Do we ever have true silence? Even if we manage to find a quiet place, most of us then fill our heads with dramas and worries from our daily lives. Silence is a place where many of us forget to return as we become addicted to noise and thoughts. So, what exists in this place of silence?

I took some time out in the hope of learning more. High in the Himalayas I attended a silent retreat... 6 days without speaking. A mixture of apprehension and excitement crept in as I stepped into my new spiritual home.

I sat with a small group of fellow silence seekers, listening to the wise words of our teacher. I learned how my mind is just a tool, not my boss. I had reached a point where my mind had started to take a little too much control for comfort. It would flood my brain with thoughts whether I wanted them or not. "Your mind is your instrument. Learn to be its master and not its slave" is a quote of Remez Sasson, author of many 'positive thinking' books. As I found myself pondering the same thought for the third time in 30 minutes I recognised I had my work cut out.

Slowly, however, I began to learn how to separate myself from my thoughts. By just watching them come and then letting them go, without getting drawn into the drama of the emotions and stories created, I felt my mind empty... just a little. I observed my breath become deeper, slower and quieter as time went on. I felt happier and more peaceful, but not in a way which felt overly exciting, just natural. Well, on a good day anyway.



At other times, my mind seemed to step into rebellion, sending me on a wild goose chase with a smorgasbord of futile day dreams. Or, chewing over past experiences which had no relevance to my current life. Our teacher assured us that this was normal at first and all part of the process. Awareness was our ally. As soon as we spotted we had trailed off onto an expedition of unwanted thoughts, we just observed this had occurred and let go. It was a challenge, as is anything when learning a new way of being, but it did become easier as time went on. Perseverance has its benefits.

By the time I left, a certain calmness had seeped into my bones. I felt more at peace with myself and my life. Just a few days later, during a sleepless night, the idea of Inspired Times became clear in my mind. I'd cleared out all the junk, had a bit of a spring clean, and made way for more worthwhile thoughts.

Silent retreats aren't practical for everyone so it's good to find places we can go and step away from our thoughts. Nature provides the best sanctuary but even the bathroom can be a silent retreat, when we lock the door and soak ourselves in hot water, away from the outside world.

My life can still be hectic, but I've discovered that it is a stillness which these moments of silence provide, bringing clarity and calm. I still have a huge amount to learn, but my journey into silence helped me regain a connection previously drowned out by my internal noise.

Yoga Teacher Training

The Sivananda Yoga Centre in Italy is holding its first Teachers Training Course (TTC) from September 6th to October 4th 2009. See their advert on the back cover or go to their website: www.sivananda.org for further details. By the end of the intensive four-week course, a firm foundation for teaching others will be established. You will also have experienced a strengthening of your own yoga practice.