

The Ambrosial Hour

Arise, awake, and stop not until the Goal is reached!
(Upanishads)



Up, sluggard, and waste not life;
in the grave will be sleeping enough.
(Benjamin Franklin)



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The more you sleep, the less you live.
(Polish saying)



They say that if one's early morning hours are wasted in sleep,
one dies before living.
(Sant Kirpal Singh)



Arise in the midst of the night and commune with thy God.
The ego will be crushed and things will be revealed to thee thou
did not know before and thy path in life will be made smooth.
(Koran)



Death, so called, is a thing which makes men weep,
and yet a third of life is passed in sleep.
(Lord Byron)



Sleep...Oh! how I loathe those little slices of death....
(Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)



If man can control the dim hours from sunset to sunrise,
he becomes a true human being. But instead we eat, drink,
enjoy the worldly pleasures until midnight,
and then snore the rest of the night away.
(Sant Kirpal Singh)



Those who have made the best use of their nights,
by knowing oneself and the Overself, have themselves been made.
Those who have wasted their nights in frivolous pursuits
have wasted themselves.
(Sant Kirpal Singh)



Sleep, that deplorable curtailment of the joy of life.
(Virginia Woolf)



At the ambrosial hour of the early dawn,
be ye in communion with the Divine Word,
and meditate on His glory.
(Guru Nanak)



These three things will help you: to eat less, sleep less,
and have mercy, forgiveness and love.
(Sant Kirpal Singh)

Sant Kirpal Singh

Excerpts from “The Time of Elixir”

The Hindu Shastras have described the early morning hours as auspicious and as God’s own time. The last three hours of night are known as the time of Elixir, for this pure and serene time was utilized for meditation by the ancient true Yogis and Saints.

All times are good for meditation, and one should utilize whatever time suits him. But the morning time just before daybreak and evening time immediately after sunset are particularly beneficial, because these times unite night and day (dusk and dawn), and spiritual currents are particularly strong and powerful at such a time.

The time of Elixir begins from three in the morning... The fruit of meditation done in the first part of the night is just like the budding of the trees, but meditation during the latter part of the night is like the tree bearing the ripe fruit. At this time, one gets the Grace of God.

During sleep the soul-consciousness comes down to the throat or the navel center, and when a person is awake, the consciousness is at the eye-center. Therefore, if one makes an effort to withdraw his consciousness from the body, which is a practice for separating spirit from matter, the soul will easily leave the body in the early morning, because at that time the soul has just entered the pores of the body and can be easily withdrawn from them.

Besides, in the early morning hour there are usually no worries of the world to occupy our minds, and such a time is therefore better for concentration, which is not possible at other times because of worldly duties, etc. At the time of Elixir the mind is quite fresh and the day’s turmoils have not spread their tentacles over it. With the rising of the sun and the falling of its rays, our thoughts begin to scatter.

In the early morning hours a person is very near God. Concentration attained and meditation done at this time leave their impression on the day’s work. And whatever such a person does, he does with a concentrate mind. (Philosophy of the Masters, Book 1, 34-36)

Night is the time when the Beloved Lord appears. Those who are asleep at this time are depriving themselves of a great boon. Day is for work, but night is for love and devotion to the Lord. Therefore, the whole night should be spent in communion with the Lord. The whole world sleeps, but the devotees spend the night in meditation at the Feet of the Lord.

(Shams i-Tabriz)



O thou beautiful moon-like seeker,
if you do not sleep at night you will gain the treasure of
immortality. Your night will become resplendent with that hidden
Sun. Your eyes will open and you will behold His splendor.

(Shams i-Tabriz)



While ordinary people waste the time of Elixir in deep sleep,
regarding it as night, the devotees of the Lord keep awake.
But during the day when ordinary people are awake,
the devotees of the Lord consider it to be night.

(Krishna)

O seeker! Cease your sleep at night and walk into the street of those who keep a vigil. You will behold them happy and blissful in the Lord's refulgence within, like lovers deep in contemplation of their Beloveds.

(Rumi)



Success awaits those who lose their heads in the pursuit of God. Living in ease and comfort, sleeping long and getting up when you will, meditating fifteen and twenty minutes at your convenience, and making up excuses for your lapses are not the means by which you reach Him. (Sant Kirpal Singh, Sat Sandesh, July 1988, 23)



Before the Buddha goes to bed,
he cast his Buddha eye around the world to see who has
the "Great Wish" and draws that person to himself.
(Buddhist scripture)



O my son, forsaking your sleep at midnight,
lie awaiting your Beloved's glance.
(Kutubdin)



O my heart, if you wish to bathe in the Light of your Beloved's
face, awake at early dawn, leave the comforts of your bed,
sit in meditation in a corner, and you will behold Him.
(Kutubdin)



God distributes musk at night. Those who remain asleep do not
receive their share. And indeed what right have they to get it when
they have a greater love for their sleep?
(Farid)



A person who does not get up and remain awake at dawn is not
alive. He is virtually dead. And the head which does not bow
in devotion to the Lord at such a time has no worth!
(Farid)

Do not spend all your night in sleeping.
Sleep as much as it is required for maintaining good health,
but don't spend all your night in sleep. Wake up early in the
morning and do the meditation.
(Guru Arjan)



Those who get up in the morning and do the meditation of Naam,
and take advantage of this precious time, they are not bothered by
the tricks of the Negative Power. They become free of It.
(Guru Arjan)



Cut if you will with sleep's dull knife
The years from off your life, my friend!
The years that death takes off my life,
He'll take from off the other end!
(Edna St. Vincent Millay)



O my blessed beloved, awake!
Why do you sleep in ignorance?
(Kabir)

Sant Kirpal Singh

Excerpts from "The Night is a Jungle"

You can make your home a lonely forest. Is not the night a lonely forest? Just consider for a moment. Those who have made the best use of their nights, by knowing oneself and the Overself, have themselves been made. Those who have wasted their nights in frivolous pursuits have wasted themselves. Even a student of worldly knowledge becomes intellectually strong if he makes full use of the night as well as the day.

Those men who exercise the physical body through the cold nights become giants in muscle and strength; it is obvious how strong they are. And the disciples who spend their nights in sweet remembrance of the Lord become God themselves. If man can control the dim hours from sunset to sunrise he becomes a true human being. But instead we eat, drink, enjoy the worldly pleasures until midnight, and then snore the rest of the night away.

One Master has said that in the night, the Lord's fragrance is given out - he who remains awake receives this precious gift. Do the worldly duties in the daytime, and at night consider that you are all alone, deep in the country.

One's duties and social obligations with family and friends should be performed with pleasure, because God has joined you together, for the sake of give and take. But in the night you can feel free from all this and repose in His lap. It is not at all necessary to leave your home and family for meditation when you have the long lonely nights. When you are wholly absorbed in some object, it is a true sanyas, cutting off from all other things, and if we start from today, most definitely our lives will change.

<http://www.ruhanisatsangusa.org/jungle.htm>



I am glad you are devoting a small time to meditation;
try to take a little more time from your night's rest,
perhaps the last portion. It will not bring fatigue,
but will be very refreshing.

(Sant Kirpal Singh)

It is reported that Ali Sahl once wrote a letter to Junaid (an early Sufi mystic) in which he declared that sleep is a form of negligence. The letter went on to declare that if a lover sleeps he is hindered in his goal and will become negligent about himself. In reply, Junaid wrote, “Our conscious effort to stay awake is a business transaction on the way to God, whereas our sleep is the active volition of God upon us. Therefore, it can be said that whatever happens from God in the absence of our conscious choice is better than what we ourselves choose in order to reach Him.”



Enter the tumultuous night
And from its ocean gather gifts unnamed.
The night hides the Beauty of the hidden;
The day cannot compare with mysterious night.
Sleep he will not want, and sleep unsound
He who has not seen the magical night.
Many pure hearts and minds
Are nothing but slaves to the night.
The night is but an empty black pot
If you want to discover the mystery of the night.
The way is long, God speed, O friends,
If you want to discover the mystery of the night.
The trade of day is in commerce;
It's quite another trade at night!

(Rumi)



The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.
People are going back and forth across the doorsill
Where the two worlds touch.
The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.
(Rumi)



Your prayers were Light
And your worship peaceful,
Your sleep an enemy of prayer.
Your life was a test, but you let
It go by without a thought.
It's ever-passing, slowly vanishes
Before you know it.
(Rabia)



Kabir on Sleep

Why do you slumber such long hours?
Why do you not see wisdom and arise?
O, pray, attach yourself to Him from whom
You have been separated for long unknown ages.

Why do you slumber such long hours?
Arise and remember the Name of the All-Merciful.
The day is not far off when you will sleep
The long sleep with your limbs stretched out in death.

Why do you slumber such long hours?
Sleeping is doing you incalculable harm.
Even the throne of Brahma was dashed to pieces,
And Brahma died, on hearing the roaring call of Kal.
Can your own death be very far away?
Remember the True Name of the Lord,
While you are still alive.

Slumber not at the hour of duty to the Lord;
Wake up and keep your vigil;
You know not if the cold hand of death
Will grasp you the next moment.

Your days are spent in the company of the world;
But this world goes not with you to the next.
There you will have to travel all alone.
With your own hands you have ruined yourself entirely
Because you did not make the spiritual journey here.



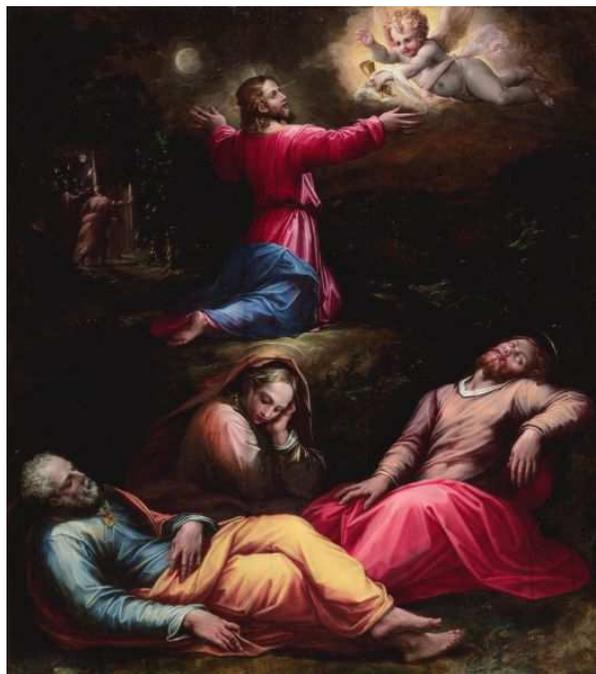
From the Gospel of Mark:
14:32-38

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.

“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”

Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. “*Abba*, Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Simon,” he said to Peter, “are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”



Advice to Meditators from a Yoga Website

1. Rise up during the ambrosial hours:

Get up at 4:00 AM daily. This is Brahmamuhurta which is extremely favorable time for doing Sadhana or yoga. All major parts of your spiritual practice should be done during this period from 4:00 AM until 6:00 or 7:00 AM. Devoting this time to your daily Sadhana will give quick and maximum results.

Why so early in the morning one may ask or others may say that time is too early that it can not be done? The yogic scriptures call this time the ambrosial hours, the 2 1/2 hours before the rising of the sun, the time at which the connection to God can be the greatest and easiest to obtain. It is in these hours that the auric protection is strongest and prana, the basic life force of consciousness, concentrates.

Another benefit is that the rest of the world and household is still asleep so there is less noise and disturbance to interfere with your meditation and yoga practice.

If you are not accustomed to waking up at such an early hour, start training yourself by setting your clock a little earlier each day until you meet the goal. At first this may seem hard to do, however, by doing your spiritual work and yoga exercises first thing upon waking it will prepare you with energy and willpower to take through the rest of your day! Plus there will be no excuses to put off this important work until later, which in fact, will most likely be forgotten as the day becomes busier.

Though many challenges may come to stop your early morning yoga practice, as you conquer each one, you will build willpower, your confidence, and the ability to connect with your higher self and the divine.

In the beginning, the conscious effort and willpower it takes to start a daily routine may seem like a negative action. It will impose discipline at the cost of some other activities such as sleep, or staying up to watch a movie, etc.

However, you must ask yourself this one question, “Are you willing to act and think in your higher consciousness, or do you wish to hang on to your old patterns and identity even longer?”



Advice from a Sikh Website

Early morning is called Amritwehla, which means that it is the time to worship God. Great importance has been put on this Godly hour. Amritwehla starts after midnight and ends around six in the morning.

One falls asleep after a long day and it is a blessed person who through some inner strength can arise at such an hour out of ones cozy bed for the sake of remembrance of the Almighty, for which he or she is duly rewarded. At this time most people are in deep sleep and disturbances are at a minimum. The atmosphere is sacred because the vibrations of the mind involved in worldly matters are not emitted from the masses since they are in deep sleep.

At this hour worldly thoughts, worries, anxieties, although not completely eliminated, are at a minimum. The atmosphere is not polluted by the radiations of worldly feelings and desires. At this time the disciple of the one true Lord will make an effort and arise. Their pure mental rays pervade all over the world and make this time sacred. Thus it becomes a congenial and encouraging atmosphere for the remembrance of God.



In his classic book “Be Here Now” Ram Dass states, “As you get further on the path you will need less and less sleep.” The scientific study below supports this claim.

Study Results: Meditation Acutely Improves Psychomotor Vigilance, And May Decrease Sleep Need (Excerpts)

A number of benefits from meditation have been claimed by those who practice various traditions, but few have been well tested in scientifically controlled studies. Among these claims are improved performance and decreased sleep need. Therefore, in these studies we assess whether meditation leads to an immediate performance improvement on a well validated psychomotor vigilance task (PVT), and second, whether longer bouts of meditation may alter sleep need.

The study examined sleep times in long term experienced meditators vs. non-meditators. Experienced meditators and controls were age and sex matched and living in the Delhi region of India at the time of the study. Both groups continued their normal activities while monitoring their sleep and meditation times.

In the study with long-term meditators, 7 subjects (3 females and 4 males, from India) with at least 3 years of regular meditation practice (2 hrs or more per day for most days of the year) were used. Age range 24-48 years and average age 38 years. All were healthy with no history of major medical, psychiatric or sleep problems. All practiced traditional yogic styles of meditation with focus on the breathing, and all would probably be classified as “concentrative” meditation as opposed to “mindfulness” meditation. Sleep journals and meditation records were kept for a minimum of 15 days (a maximum of 30 days).

Twenty-three control subjects in India were also selected for total sleep time comparisons relative to the seven meditators. These control subjects were sex and age matched.

This experiment suggests that meditation serves a performance-enhancing and perhaps restorative role even in novice meditators.

To address this possible restorative role over longer durations, we conducted an initial study on seven long-term “expert” meditators in India, who typically spent 2-3 hrs/day in meditation, versus 23 age - and sex-matched non-meditators as controls.

These subjects had sufficient amounts of daily meditation time such that it might produce a noticeable decrease in total sleep time if meditation can actually replace a portion of sleep, or compensate in some other way.

Average sleep duration for long-term meditators versus non-meditators in India: Meditators had significantly shorter sleep durations than non-meditators - 5.2 versus 7.8 hours per day.

Although the frequencies and generation of neuronal synchronization are different in meditation and sleep, the increase during meditation coupled with claims that meditation is restorative, led us to investigate the related question of whether this practice (meditation) might be able to replace a portion of sleep.

While the results presented here are preliminary, they support the possibility of some restoration. All seven Yogis that we studied have sleep times below both the control population we assessed and with published norms from multiple different ethnic groups, and all had substantial periods of meditation each day approximately equal to the “lost” sleep.

Anecdotal claims that some Yogis do not sleep at all or only two hours/night are probably exaggerated, as are many sleep claims, but a one to one pay-off of sleep debt through meditation appears possible for a portion of sleep.

When we challenged Yogis with a total night of sleep deprivation, they were generally too tired to meditate successfully, further discounting the idea that extensive meditation could totally or largely replace sleep. An alternative

explanation of our results could be that meditators have deeper or more intense sleep, and thus may be able to achieve the restorative benefits of sleep in less time.

It may be of interest to note that our seven Yogis all slept between four and six hours a day. Perhaps, there is a basic core amount of sleep that is critical to all mammals (and perhaps all or most non-mammals too) and cannot be replaced by anything but sleep.

Sleep time in mammals varies from about four to nineteen hours, potentially supporting a view that some portion of sleep in longer sleeping mammals is adaptive and not critical for basic brain functions.

Some researchers have suggested that humans have a core need of four to six hours of sleep per day. However, considerable data have shown that chronic restriction to this amount of sleep in most humans results in poor performance and the accumulation of substantial sleep debt.

While there is still some debate regarding these issues, there is general consensus that the majority of adults need about 7 hours or more per night for optimal or near-optimal function without accumulating a sleep debt. Yet, our limited data to date suggest that the Yogis in this study are near or exceed the optimal range on PVT and MSLT with less than 7 hours of sleep, and may be replacing one to three hours of sleep with meditation (despite no signs of sleep during these meditation bouts).

Planned EEG studies in meditators may provide supporting data if we find that high alpha or other synchronous firing during meditation reduces the EEG delta power during subsequent sleep (or in the alternative explanation above, might increase EEG delta power as the Yogis sleep more intensely).

It is also possible that meditation might be able to do whatever it is that sleep does, by a different but overlapping process.

Conclusions:

Meditation appears to provide at least a short term improvement in reaction time performance, and may also provide a longer term reduction in sleep need roughly equal to the time spent in meditation.

In long term meditators, multiple hours spent in meditation are associated with a significant decrease in total sleep time when compared with age and sex matched controls who did not meditate.

<http://rewireyourbrainforlove.com/study-results-meditation-acutely-improves-psychomotor-vigilance-and-may-decrease-sleep-need/>



“Utilized properly, meditation and sleep will complement each other. If you sleep well you can meditate deeper, and conversely if you meditate regularly, you can sleep much better. Meditation allows the mind and body to experience deeper sleep and receive rest because the mind prepares the body to submerge into a deep sleep without a period of "cooling down." This helps prevent tossing and turning and increases REM sleep, which is critical to maintaining good health and facilitating the growth and rejuvenation of the physical body.

In a fast-paced society where people search for time short cuts, meditation cannot and should not replace sleep. However, if regularly practiced, meditation will greatly enhance the quality of sleep and decrease the amount of it a body needs.”

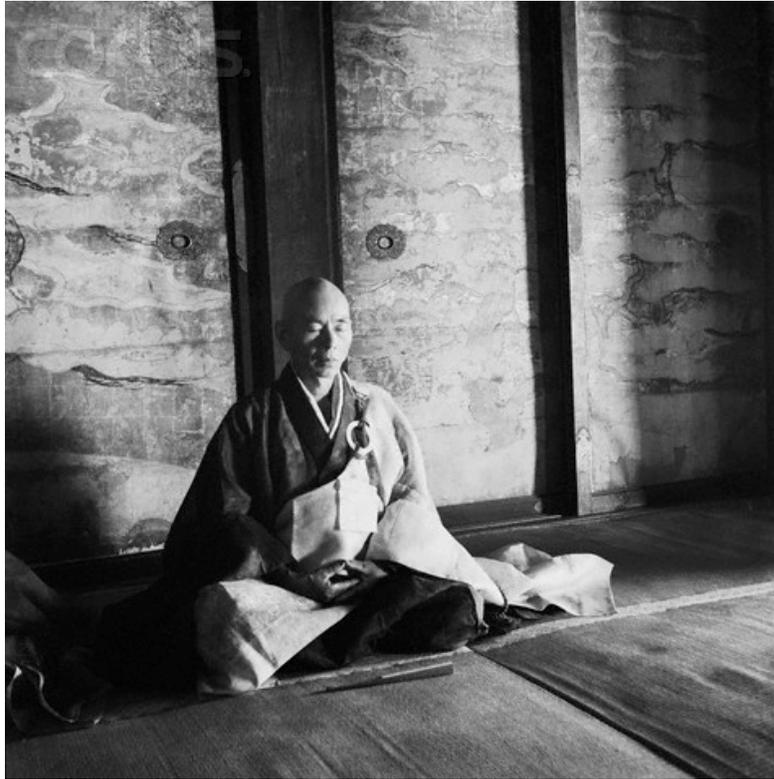
<http://ezinearticles.com/?Can-Meditation-Replace-Sleep?&id=4241066>



Sleep – death without dying –
living, but not life.
(Edwin Arnold)

O Wayfarer, be like Hafiz: get up and make an effort!
Don't lie around like a bum. He who throws himself at the
Beloved's feet is like a workhorse and will be rewarded
with boundless pastures and eternal rest.

(Hafiz)



O Master, You are so gracious. After all these years
You still remember who I am: the one who wears the dust of Your
door like a crown. Tell me, who taught You to be so generous to
Your slaves? O Holy Bird, please bless this path I'm on, for I'm
new to this traveling, and it's a long way I have to go. O morning
breeze, take my prayers to the Master, and tell Him that each day
I am on my knees at dawn.

(Hafiz)



The spiritually enlightened choose freely to devote
themselves to the work of the next world;
the foolish choose freely
the work of this.
(Rumi)



Oh, my Beloved, You will find us every night,
on Your street, with our eyes glued to Your window,
waiting for a glimpse of Your radiant face.
(Rumi)



We are at our very best, and we are happiest,
when we are fully engaged in work we enjoy on the journey
toward the goal we've established for ourselves. It gives meaning
to our time off and comfort to our sleep. It makes everything else
in life so wonderful, so worthwhile.
(Earl Nightingale)



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The worm is in the root of the body's tree; travelers, it is late!
Life's sun is going to set. During these brief days that you have
strength, be quick and spare no effort of your wings.
(Rumi)



Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be.
Remind me that my days are numbered, and that my life
is fleeing away.
(Psalm 39:4)



O God, another night is passing away,
Another day is rising.
Tell me that I have spent the night well
So I can be at peace, or that I have wasted it,
So I can mourn for what is lost.
I swear that ever since the first day
You brought me back to life,
The day You became my Friend,
I have not slept – and even if you drive me
From Your door, I swear again
That we will never be separated,
Because you are alive in my heart.
(Rabia)



How is it that those people are most beautiful who pray at night?
Because they are alone with the All-Merciful who covers them
with Light from His Light.
(Hasan Ibn 'Ali)



O God, the stars are shining:
All eyes have closed in sleep;
Each lover is alone, in secret, with the one he loves.
And I am here too: alone, hidden from all of them –
With You.
(Rabia)

If you are thinking that observing the Ambrosial Hour is exceedingly difficult, the following information is provided as an example of what some people are doing to follow their faith:

**Typical week-day schedule for a monk at a Cartusian monastery –
a Catholic cloistered monastery in Vermont**

11:30 pm = rise from bed
11:45 pm = in cell prayer
12:15 am = church service (prayers, hymns, chants, Biblical readings)
2:15 am to 3:15am = return to cell, prayer to Blessed Virgin; to bed
6:30 am = rise
6:45 am = in cell prayer or spiritual reading from scripture
7:45 am = church service – conventional mass
8:45 am = return to cell for spiritual reading and study
10:00 am = in cell reading of the psalms
10:45 am = study or manual work
11:45 am = in cell recitation of set prayers and psalms
12 noon = meal & recreation (reading, gardening, walk outside)
2:00 pm = in cell recitation of set prayers and psalms
3:15 pm = manual work
4:00 pm = in cell prayer service to the Virgin Mary
4:45 pm = free time
5:00 pm = church service
6:00 pm = light evening meal; free time
7:00 pm = in cell last service of the day
8:00 pm = bedtime



The Life of a Carthusian Cloister Monk

Stay in the Cell

Our principal endeavor and goal is to devote ourselves to the silence and solitude of cell. Therefore the dweller in cell should be diligently and carefully on his guard against contriving or accepting occasions for going out, other than those normally prescribed. Each monk, therefore, is given all the tools that he needs to avoid his having to leave cell, since this is in no way permitted, except when the community is meeting in church or cloister, or on occasions laid down by rule.



Maintain Silence

Our rule is not to speak to one another without the President's permission. Love for our brothers should show itself firstly in respect for their solitude. Should we have permission to speak about some matter, let us do so as briefly as possible. If, however, it does happen that a group of the fathers are deputed to work together, they can speak among themselves of matters useful for the work, but they may not speak to passers-by.

Remain Sheltered from the World

We should not allow our minds to wander through the world in search of news and gossip; on the contrary, our part is to remain hidden in the shelter

of the Lord's presence. We should therefore avoid all secular books or periodicals that could disturb our interior silence. To introduce newspapers treating of politics into the cloister in any way would be particularly contrary to the spirit of our Order. If, by chance, we come to know something of events in the world, we must be careful not to pass it on to others.



Visitors

Since it is written, "Honor your father and your mother," we relax a little the rigor of our enclosure in order to receive the visit of our parents and other relations each year for two days. But apart from this, we avoid visits from friends and conversations with seculars. No visitors (other than those mentioned above) are allowed in a Carthusian monastery.

Women are Prohibited

Women can not be admitted within the cloister (other than those mentioned above).

Diet

The fathers keep abstinence once a week, normally on Friday. On that day they content themselves with bread and water. We exclude all eating and taking of meat from our way of life. On certain days and at certain times of the year, we observe the fast of the Order, and take only one meal a day.



No Internet

We do not use the Internet.

No Applicants over Forty

Applicants over 40 are not often admitted as they, in general, are already "formed" and habituated to the ways of the world.



(The DVD "Into Great Silence" documents life in a Carthusian monastery.)

Early morning is the most beneficial time for meditation.
Supreme oneness of thought upon the true Naam is had at the ambrosial
small hours before dawn. So rise early, and shake off all feelings of sloth.
Go into the remembrance of Him even if you are lying down – even at night,
or when resting. Go to sleep with the same thought, so that the very
remembrance of Him will be the very beat of your pulse. When you arise in
the morning, be awakened – have a bath or wake yourself by any means,
but be really awake when you sit down for meditation. With these habits,
even in sleep your meditation will continue; and when awake,
even then you will have that meditative attitude all day.
(Sant Kirpal Singh)



May your soul be happy;
journey joyfully.
(Rumi)

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