

Meditation Goes Beyond The Brain

by Piya Tan

Scientists now know that meditation is healthy for your brain and your body, but Buddhists know that meditation is good for your whole being.

We have a triune (three-in-one) brain: the lizard brain (the spinal bulb), the dog brain (the limbic system) and the human brain (the neo-cortex, the largest part of the brain).

The lizard brain controls our breath, vision and body movements, and arouses sexual feelings, pulls us away from danger and makes us want to control our surrounding. With **breath meditation**, our breath and heartbeat slow down, calming the lizard brain. We become more physically relaxed.

The dog brain experiences emotions, such as love, and other feelings. **The cultivation of lovingkindness** enriches and extends this area of our being, allowing more trust and joy beyond ourselves.

The human brain or neo-cortex deals with language and reason. It makes music, poetry, and beautiful things possible. It also deals with reason. This is where our worries arise from as it were.

When we combine **a healthy balance of breath meditation and lovingkindness**, harmonizing our head with our heart, all the three levels of the brain are harmonized. We become more than the sum of our physical parts.

The dog brain tends to be stuck in the past, remembering old things, and the human brain tends to look ahead, often remaining stuck in the non-existent future. So if we are only brain-centred, we are neither here nor there most of the time.

When the whole brain and the body are unified in a single thought, such as the joyful breath, then we are in **the present moment**, the only reality we can ever know.

Try this simple experiment: sit quietly and simply watch your breath until it is very gentle and slow with gaps of no-breath in between. Notice how peaceful those breath-gaps are.

If you wish to read more about the triune brain, see this website (thanks, Yew Thong for the information):

http://www.thebiggestideas.com/cgi-bin/viewps.cgi?you_have_three_brainsps.txt

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