

## **Mindfulness of Breathing Online Course**

Audio meditation transcription

### Guided Meditation 1 – Mindfulness and the Breath

We are aware of the body in the sitting posture. And we let the mind rest on the body, just as the body rests on the cushion.

And without losing this embodied presence of the mind, we will now proceed through the preliminaries of mindfulness of breathing.

And just as we found an appropriate secluded place for our practice, so we establish seclusion in the mental dimension by letting go of all of our worries, concerns, plans, duties and responsibilities. We can take them up later. No need for them now.

And just as we found a stable foundation for our practice by putting the body in the sitting posture, so we establish a stable foundation in the mental realm by formulating our motivation, our intention, why we are meditating, and ideally with an altruistic dimension.

And having formulated our motivation, we slowly pass our attention through the spine, from bottom to top, aware of vertebra after vertebra, relaxing. Allowing the spine to naturally align itself, and become straight, simply by passing our attention slowly from bottom to top, and relaxing, aligning. Until eventually the whole body feels as if suspended from on top of the head, and all the rest relaxing downwards, naturally straight, without tension.

And just as we found this natural straightness of the body, so we find natural straightness in the mind, pointing the mind right at the present moment, here and now. We cannot live in the past; we cannot live in the future. Present moment, only time when we can live.

And coming right to the present moment, we make mindfulness predominant, bringing it to the fore.

And we take a moment to familiarize ourselves with the condition of the mind when mindfulness is present. What does the mind feel like when mindfulness is predominant? Maybe soft, gentle.

Maybe alert, awake. Maybe receptive, open. Maybe broad, spacious. Just taking time to be with our good friend, *sati*.

And through being with *sati*, checking in on the condition of the mind, meeting the mind where it is.

And in the presence of mindfulness, we become aware of the breathing, of the process of breathing in, breathing out. Just aware of this basic distinction between inhalations and exhalations.

And we might use some physical sensation for this purpose: upper lip, nostril, back of the throat, chest, abdomen area, or even no particular location, all the while aware that our main interest, our main point of attention is the breath itself. Any physical sensation is like the finger pointing to the moon. We want to see the moon, not just the finger. We want to be aware of the breath, not just the sensation.

And we cultivate this awareness of inhalation and exhalation as part of whole-body awareness.

And with this, already at this point, with this very simple practice of just being aware of inhalation and exhalation – which is like the backbone of the entire scheme of 16 steps – we can already cultivate tranquillity and insight.

Breathing in, breathing out. Breath is changing phenomena – impermanent. That is our insight.

Breathing in, breathing out, we are in the present moment. And that subtle pleasant feeling of being in the present moment, paying attention to it, very subtle, very gentle. The joy of being in the present moment. That is our tranquillity.

That is what empowers our ability to stay with the breath. Breath as such is neutral; mind easily wanders. But by joining the breath with the pleasant feeling of being in the present moment, it becomes so much easier for the mind not to wander away.

And whenever the mind still wanders away, we notice smilingly, smilingly without any kind of negativity or frustration. We just realize, “Oh, look, mind has taken me for a ride. But here, I am

back again, in the present moment. Back in the present moment, and in the company of my good friend, *sati*, mindfulness.”

And back with the process of breathing: in, out. And that direct experience of change, of impermanence: that is also what we take along from sitting to walking, to other activities. Aware of change. When we do walking meditation, this is particularly evident. Whole body is changing, in moving, stepping, sensations. Impermanent. Attending to the process character of experience.

And whenever possible we also bring in the dimension of tranquillity through the pleasant feeling of being in the present moment. In this way, already with this very simple preliminary practice, establishing the collaboration of tranquillity and insight as the basic parameters of our practice of mindfulness of breathing.

Keep practicing like this.