

## Satipaṭṭhāna Online Course

Audio meditation transcription

### Guided Meditation – 4 Feelings

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 form of mindfulness, we will now proceed through four spokes in the wheel of our *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation: three body contemplations and contemplation of feeling.

Anatomical parts:

Beginning with the head: skin.

From the head to the neck.

Shoulders.

Arms.

Hands.

Torso.

Hips.

Legs.

And the feet.

And continuing right away for the flesh:

From the feet to the legs.

Hips.

Torso.

The hands.

Arms.

Shoulders.

Neck.

The head.

And the bones:

From the head to the neck.

Shoulders.

Arms.

Hands.

Torso.

Hips.

Legs.

And the feet.

And we are aware of this body in this sitting posture. of its skin, flesh, and bones. Cultivating an attitude of non-attachment.

And the elements:

Earth element:

From the head to the neck.

Shoulders.

Arms.

Hands.

Torso.

Hips.

Legs.

And feet.

And we are aware of this body in the sitting posture, as pervaded by the earth element - with an understanding of its empty nature.

And the water element:

Beginning from the feet.

Moving up to the legs.

Hips.

Torso.

Hands.

Arms.

Shoulders.

Neck.

And the head.

And we are aware of this body in the sitting posture, as pervaded by the water element – with an understanding of its empty nature.

And the fire element:

Beginning from the head.

To the neck.

Shoulders.

Arms.

Hands.

Torso.

Hips.

Legs.

And feet.

And we are aware of this body in the sitting posture, as pervaded by the fire element – with an understanding of its empty nature.

And the wind element:

Starting from the feet.

Moving up to the legs.

The hips.

Torso.

Hands.

Arms.

Shoulders.

Neck.

And head.

And we are aware of this body in the sitting posture, as pervaded by the wind element – with an understanding of its empty nature.

And we connect with the breath as that which connects us to life. There comes a time this breath will stop and this body will die. And we may use the mental image of a skeleton to remind ourselves of the ultimate destiny of this body, to fall apart. And with every inhalation, we are aware of the fact – this could be my last breath. And even if it is not my last breath, it is certainly one breath closer to death. And with every exhalation, we relax and let go, relax and let go.

And having through these three body contemplations, cultivated non-attachment, insight into emptiness, and recognition of our mortality – we move on to contemplation of feelings.

During these body scans, that which feels the body – that is feeling. That which feels the breath – that is also feeling. *Vedanā*. Three hedonic or affective tones: pleasant, unpleasant, neutral.

We start with pleasant feelings:

Aware of the head area, let me see if there is some pleasant feeling there.

From the head to the neck. Checking for some pleasant feeling. Whatever feeling or sensation we experience, simply checking for those that are experienced as pleasant.

From the neck to one shoulder, pleasant feelings.

The arm, pleasant feelings.

And the hand, pleasant feelings.

The other shoulder. Aware of that part of the body, and seeing if there is some pleasant feeling there somewhere.

From the shoulder to the arm, pleasant feelings.

And the hand, pleasant feelings.

Upper half of torso. Seeing if there is some pleasant feeling somewhere.

Lower half of torso, pleasant feelings.

One hip, pleasant feelings.

The leg, pleasant feelings.

And the foot, checking for pleasant feelings.

The other hip, pleasant feelings.

The leg, pleasant feelings.

And the foot, pleasant feelings.

And we are aware of this whole body in the sitting posture, of any pleasant feelings manifesting in or on this body. Could be feelings of warmth, smoothness, relaxation, pulsing, tingling.

Whatever it is, no need to label in any other way - just recognizing if it is pleasant, agreeable.

Pleasant feelings.

And now we proceed to unpleasant feelings:

Starting where we left off with the foot. Aware of that foot, let me see if there is some unpleasant feeling there. Some tension, some pressure. Whatever it is, just labeling it as unpleasant feeling.

And from the foot to the leg, unpleasant feeling.

The hip, unpleasant feeling.

The other foot, unpleasant feeling.

The leg, unpleasant feeling.

And the hip, unpleasant feeling.

Lower half of torso, unpleasant feeling.

And upper half of torso, unpleasant feeling.

Shifting attention to one hand, checking in for any unpleasant feeling.

The arm, unpleasant feeling.

And the shoulder, unpleasant feeling.

The other hand, unpleasant feeling.

The arm, unpleasant feeling.

And the shoulder, unpleasant feeling.

The neck, unpleasant feeling.

And the head, checking if any unpleasant feeling is there.

And we are aware of this whole body in the sitting posture, of any unpleasant feeling manifesting anywhere in or on this body.

And neutral feelings: neither distinctly pleasant nor distinctly unpleasant.

Starting with the head. Let me see if there's any neutral feeling in the head area.

And from the head to the neck, neutral feelings.

One shoulder, neutral feelings.

The arm, neutral feelings.

And the hand, neutral feelings.

The other shoulder, neutral feelings.

The arm, neutral feelings.

And the hand, neutral feelings.

The upper half of the torso, checking in for any neutral feelings.

And lower half of torso, neutral feelings.

One hip, neutral feelings.

The leg, neutral feelings.

And the foot, neutral feelings.

The other hip, neutral feelings.

The leg, neutral feelings.

And the foot, neutral feelings.

And we are aware of this whole body in the sitting posture, of any neutral feelings in or on the body.

And from having explored bodily pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings, we open the vista of our awareness to include any feelings – even those that manifest predominately on the mental

level, without a strong or clearly evident bodily component - just aware of the affective quality, the hedonic tone of our experience.

And as we keep practicing, aware of feelings, we come to realize the degree to which this body is a constant source of unpleasant or even painful feelings. The pain of the bodily posture, the unpleasant feelings when being afflicted by outside temperature, hunger and thirst. The body is a constant source of pain. So much of our activities are just to relieve the pain inherent in having a body. And as we practice, we also notice another feeling – and fortunately, this is a pleasant one – the pleasant mental feeling of being in the present moment. Very subtle. Very subtle pleasant feeling, just from being established in the present moment.

And as we keep practicing, aware of feelings, we notice – they all share one quality, one characteristic. They are impermanent. Just like bubbles on the surface of water, one feeling after the other. Changing phenomena. And it is this distinct direct experience at the feeling level, of impermanence, that we carry over into our open practice. Opening up to experience at the six sense doors, in whatever way it unfolds. And with a more clear discernment, awareness, of its hedonic tone, its affective quality. And that felt sense of impermanence. Changing phenomena.

And sooner or later, mind is bound to wander. As soon as we realize, smilingly, we come back to the present moment. And for a moment, we keep noticing the feeling tone - the affective quality of the daydream, memory, fantasy, that has taken us away from the present moment.

And another potential source of distraction can be bodily pain due to the posture. Some itch here or there. Whenever this comes up, we keep watching it for a moment. Watching it without immediately reacting, to discern the push of feeling. The push of clamoring for our attention and clamoring for a reaction – scratch me scratch me, stretch me stretch me, move me move me. Just aware of this push - to explore the conditionality of feeling – the way feelings influence our mind. And the suggestion is not to sit through excruciating pain for long periods. The suggestion is only for a moment, to explore that push. And having explored that push, then take the appropriate action – scratching, stretching, or moving – whatever it may be.

And from having explored this push with painful feelings, we eventually also become aware of it with pleasant feelings - and at times even with neutral feelings, the push for something more entertaining.

That push is our direct experience of conditionality. Conditionality and impermanence: two powerful insights to be taken along from this contemplation of feelings. Direct felt sense of impermanence, and the direct experience of conditionality. *Paticca samuppāda*. At the crucial link where feeling can give rise to craving, but does not have to give rise to craving.

And contemplating feelings with insight, we are planting the seeds of wisdom, growing the seeds of insight. Step by step, progressing on the path to complete freedom from craving.

Keep practicing like this.