

Satipaṭṭhāna Online Course

Audio meditation transcription

Guided Meditation – 5 Mind

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 five spokes in the wheel of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation: three contemplations of the body, contemplation of feelings, and of mind.

But before that we take a moment to formulate our intention – that which motivates us to practice meditation.

And having formulated our intention, we start with the anatomical parts. And this time we will do it in a single flow.

Skin:

From the head, moving... down... to... the... feet.

Flesh:

From the feet, moving... up... to... the... head.

And the bones:

From the head, moving... down... to... the... feet.

And we are aware of this body in the sitting posture, made up of skin, flesh and bones – cultivating an attitude of non-attachment.

And the elements, done continuously:

Starting with the earth element:

From the head to the neck, shoulders, arms, hands, torso, hips, legs, and the feet.

And continuing with the water element:

From the feet to the legs, hips, torso, the hands, arms, shoulders, neck, the head.

And the fire element:

From the head to the neck, shoulders, arms, hands, torso, hips, legs, and the feet.

And the wind element:

From the feet 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 these four elements – with an understanding of their empty nature.

And we connect with the breath as that which connects us to life. And we bring to mind the image of a skeleton, or any other stage of decay, to remind ourselves of the ultimate fate of this body – to fall apart. And with every inhalation, we are aware: This could be my last breath. I cannot be sure. And even if it is not the last breath, it is certainly one breath closer to death. And with every exhalation, we relax and let go, relax and let go.

And feelings:

Starting with pleasant feelings:

Aware of the head area, checking in if there is any pleasant feeling in the head area.

And from the head to the neck.

Both shoulders.

The arms.

The hands.

The torso.

The hips.

The legs.

And the feet.

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

And unpleasant or even painful feelings:

Starting from the feet, checking in if there are any unpleasant feelings in that part of the body.

And from the feet to the legs.

Hips.

Torso.

Hands.

Arms.

Shoulders.

Neck.

And the head.

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

And neutral feelings:

Starting with the head, checking in for any neutral feelings in this part of the body.

And from the head to the neck.

Shoulders.

Arms.

Hands.

Torso.

Hips.

Legs.

And the feet.

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

And whatever feelings there are, in or on this body, we open up the vista of our awareness to other feelings manifesting more predominately on the mental level, with not such a clearly distinctly discernable bodily component – pleasant, unpleasant, neutral – aware of the affective dimension, the hedonic tone of our experience. And with all of these feelings, aware of their impermanence. Every feeling is a messenger of impermanence, messenger of change.

Changing feelings. And whenever possible, also exploring the push of feelings, their conditionality, the way they influence our mind.

That which reacts to feelings, which knows feelings, that which knows the breath, the body – that is the mind. And we turn our attention to discerning the mind, that which knows its condition. And due to the *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation done up to this point, chances are fairly high that this is a mental state in which mindfulness is present. We familiarize ourselves with the texture of this state of mind, its flavor, its characteristic. The mind, when mindfulness is present. There's an openness, perhaps. Or maybe a softness, gentleness, receptivity. We find out what it feels like for us when mindfulness is there. Maybe alert, alive. Developing intimacy, intimacy with this state of mind in which mindfulness is present. This enables us to clearly recognize when mindfulness is there, or else, when mindfulness has been lost.

And this is the main thrust of contemplation of the mind: to keep monitoring what is happening within, not all attention towards what happens without, the objects of our experience. The mind: what is happening within? How is the mind? What is its present condition? With mindfulness, or without mindfulness? This is what we want to know, observe, understand, and experience.

And sooner or later, as we are practicing *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation, mindfulness is lost, and mind wanders off. Some distraction or the other. Reminiscing the past, chasing after the future. And as soon as we realize, smilingly, smilingly we realize, oh look, mind has wandered away. If it is a short distraction, we simply notice loss of mindfulness, and come back to mindfulness established. But if it is a longer distraction, we explore. Let me see. Let me see if this fantasy, sustained thought, daydream – was that predominately in the mode of lust? Or predominately in the mode of aversion? Or neither of the two, predominately in the realm of just delusion?

And for discerning these three, feeling comes to our help. If the mind was in a state of lust - chances are, at that time, worldly pleasant feelings were present. If the mind was involved in aversion, anger, irritation - chances are, at that time worldly unpleasant or even painful feelings were present. And if the mind was just involved in deluded associations, ambling here and there, clouded state of mind – chances are, worldly neutral feelings were present.

Contemplating in this way, we begin to gain a better understanding of the distinguishment between worldly and unworldly feelings. And that better understanding, in turn, helps us to more clearly discern the condition of the mind – the underlying current beneath the surface of thoughts. And having discerned the type of distraction that we had experienced, for a moment, we remain aware of our present condition of the mind. The pleasantness of the mind that has emerged from lust, emerged from aversion, emerged from deluded distraction. Savoring, flavoring that pleasant condition of the mind in which these three defiled states are absent – and mindfulness is present.

And as we keep practicing like this, we come to notice how much the mind keeps changing. Mind is also impermanent. Even that bare knowing quality, although it is continuously present, still, it is also just a process. If it were not changing, it would forever be frozen in the condition of knowing just one single thing. The very fact that it knows different things shows that this knowing quality also is impermanent. Changing. And we also realize, we are not in full control even in our own mind. Sitting down to meditate with the clear intention to stay in the present moment, we find, sooner or later, mind goes off on its own. Even in our own mind, we are not in full control. Mind is not self. Empty of self.

And with this third *satipaṭṭhāna*, we come to a comprehensive realization of the three characteristics. Body, feeling, mind: impermanent phenomena. Changing phenomena. And what

is impermanent cannot yield lasting satisfaction. It is *dukkha*. Unsatisfactory, ultimately unsatisfactory. And what is impermanent, *dukkha*, of a nature to change – how could this be the self? Empty phenomena. Body, feeling, mind: *aniccā, dukkha, anattā*. Impermanent, unsatisfactory, empty of a self.

And with this understanding, insight, realization – we proceed to our open practice. Opening up to whatever occurs, manifests, however experience unfolds at the six sense doors. Rooted in whole body awareness. That felt sense of change. And mindfulness present. Mindfulness well established in the mind. And that insight, that understanding, whatever manifests is impermanent. What is impermanent cannot yield lasting satisfaction. It is *dukkha*. And what is impermanent, *dukkha*, of a nature to change – cannot be the self. It is empty. *Aniccā, dukkha, anattā*.

Planting the seeds of wisdom, growing the seeds of insight, step by step. Step by step we are progressing on the path to complete freedom of the mind.

Keep practicing like this.