



SATIPATTHANA MEDITATION SOCIETY OF CANADA

How to Practice Insight Meditation

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SITTING MEDITATION

Sit cross-legged, back and head straight, chin tucked slightly in and shoulders shifted a little back. Hands should be placed on your knees, palms up or down, or in your lap, palms up, with one on top of the other. Close your eyes, breath normally and assume a relaxed attitude, both physically and mentally. Do not adjust your position during the period of sitting. If one must move for any reason it should be very slowly and mindfully, a couple of times in one sitting is permissible. If you move more often it will tend to become an undesirable habit.

Observation of Body

Quiet your mind and direct its attention towards your abdominal (stomach) area (“primary object”). Rising movement (expansion) and falling movement (contraction) of the abdomen will become obvious. Observe this movement as if you are watching an object. With the rising movement mentally note “rising” and with the falling movement mentally note “falling” – do this with precision. This noting or labelling is used to guide and synchronize awareness and process. Do not emphasize on the words but on the process (movement). Observe the beginning, middle and end of each movement if you can. Don’t force or strain, let the process unfold naturally. For beginners the gross forms and lesser details of

the process will be obvious. For experienced yogis (students) with better concentration the subtle forms and finer details of the process will become evident. This means one is penetrating into the nature of body (object or matter).

Observation of Mind

Attention which is focused on the body will often shift, mostly to thoughts. This is the nature of the untrained mind. Do not stop or block thoughts. As soon as you become aware that you are thinking acknowledge by mentally saying “thinking, thinking” (meaning this is a thought process or a thinking phenomenon). Just by acknowledging the thought it simply dissolves. This is the power of mindfulness or awareness. Once thought dissolves direct your attention back to the primary object (rising and falling of your abdomen). The more you catch your thoughts the better your concentration becomes.

Most thoughts are trivial and wandering in nature. Imagining, fantasizing, remembering, hoping and planning are thoughts that fall in the category of past or future, not in the present. If you recognize the specific character of any thought then simply label or note it as “planning”, “drifting”, “anger”, etc.

Observation of Feeling

Thoughts with intense positive emotions (excitement, love, joy, happiness, peacefulness, etc.) will produce pleasant feelings, and thoughts with intense negative emotions (envy, jealousy, irritation, frustration, anger, hatred, ill-will, etc.) will produce unpleasant feelings. Some emotions are so intense they manifest into physical representation (intense anger can manifest as tightness in the body, a tensed muscle, clenched jaw or fists, faster heart beat, etc. A thought of intense joy will manifest as a smile). Wandering and low intensity thoughts produce neutral feelings that are difficult to detect. Only an advanced yogi can observe neutral feelings. Similarly, physical sensations will give rise to

pain and pleasure that produce unpleasant and pleasant feelings. Simply observe the feeling, don't get hooked on it.

Pain is a very interesting feature for yogis and one you may experience after 30 or 45 minutes of sitting. The involuntary response is to adjust the sitting position to relieve the pain. Don't. If you move that is the reaction of your conditioned mind, hating anything that is unpleasant and wanting anything that is pleasant. Shift that mental state to a neutral state and observe the pain penetratively. Do not worry about getting into any kind of physical, medical problems. Thousands of yogis have passed through this stage without any problem. In fact, pain is very good for the progress of a yogi. It keeps your attention fixed on it and that gives rise to concentration, a requirement for insight.

Observation of Other Activities

Sight, sound, smell, taste and touch are also objects of insight meditation. When one sees mental images during sitting meditation then note or label this phenomenon of seeing as "seeing, seeing". Similarly, note "hearing", "smelling", "touching" or "tasting" accordingly.

WALKING MEDITATION

Choose a straight path 15 to 20 feet in length for walking meditation. Stand, keeping your head and body straight, chin slightly tucked, eyes open but cast downward, look 6 to 9 feet ahead. Do not look in any other direction. Start walking slowly, observe the movements of each step and mentally label "stepping, stepping" in precision with the movements. After a couple of minutes, observe the lifting and dropping movements of each foot until your noting mind and movements are totally synchronized. Next, observe the lifting, pushing forward and dropping movements of each step, mentally label with each

segment. Depending on your concentration you can divide each step into six parts of observation, lifting, raising, pushing, dropping, touching and pressing.

At the end of each path put a concerted effort to observe the stopping action, the standing posture and then the intention to turn before making the actual turn. Watch the details of the turning movements. Also watch and note the intention to lift before making the lifting movement. One may increase as many segments in each step during an hour of walking meditation provided there is precision between the noting mind and the movements or process. One should not decrease the number of segments of each step once you have maintained a certain level.

DAILY ACTIVITIES MEDITATION

Everything you do, other than sitting and walking meditation, during the day at a retreat must be carefully observed. This includes waking up, getting out of bed, making the bed, changing clothes, taking showers, using the washroom, drinking, eating, stretching or bending the hands or the body, touching, etc.

Any activities during your normal days can also be observed with general awareness. Be aware of rising and falling movements while you are on a bus or anywhere else convenient to watch. Watch stepping movements while going from one building to another. In other words be aware of any activities whenever and wherever appropriate and convenient to watch. This will give you a full awareness of most of the things you do, speak or think. This in turn will keep you on a correct and wholesome path away from all negativities.

Important Points: Simply **observe & be aware or mindful** of whatever is arising and disappearing or passing away within your field of attention. Do not analyse, reflect, imagine or control. Use no opinion and no judgement. Everything simply **“Is”** or **“as it is”**, without adding or subtracting anything.