

A Brief Description of Meditation

Taken from "Chanting Book"

The Buddhist Center of Dallas

<http://watdallas.org/>



Now, here is a brief description of meditation, that is, the way to develop mental collectedness. It is prescribed in the texts that for developing collectedness of mind one should seek a suitable place which is not subject to noise and disturbance. A quiet place in a forest, at the foot of a tree or in a quiet building is suitable for the purpose. The intention is to find any reasonably peaceful place. One should then go there and sit down with legs crossed, traditionally with the right foot on the left foot, hands are put on the lap; the right hand placed on the left hand. The body should be straight. One may, however, sit with one's legs folded to one side, etc. This is up to one's comfort and ease. One should then close the eyes and collect one's faculties together and be aware of the touching sensation of the breath. One can know whether the breathing is in or the breathing is out. If it should be asked where one should be aware of this breathing in and out, the answer would be that an easy spot where one can be aware of this is the outermost point of one's nostrils or the upper lip which the air touches on being breathed in. The inhaled air touches the outermost point of the nostrils and the upper lip while the abdomen expands, and the exhaled air touches at the same spots when the abdomen contracts. Easily feel the air which goes in from the tip of the nostrils to the abdomen which expands and feel the air going out from contracting abdomen to the end of the nostrils. First get to know the process of breathing in and out as described above. In breathing in the breath starts from the nostril cavities and goes to the swelling abdomen; and in breathing out the breath leaves the contracting abdomen and flows to the tip of the nose. This is known as the path of the wind (namely the breath). Now it is not necessary to follow the breath down to the abdomen; it is only necessary to rest one's attention upon the tip of the nose so that one knows if breathing is in or out. One should naturally collect one's mental awareness together and be conscious of the touching sensation of the breath. Initially, in developing this collected-awareness, counting may be used as an aid: thus, breathing in 1, breathing out 1; breathing in 2,

breathing out 2; 3-3; 4-4; 5-5. Then back to 1 again, thus, 1-1; 2-2; 3-3; 4-4; 5-5; 6-6; Back to 1 again, thus, 1-1; 2-2; to 7-7. Back to 1 again, thus, 1-1;2-2; to 8-8. Back to 1 again, thus, 1-1; 2-2; to 9-9. Back to 1 again thus, 1-1; 2-2; to 10-10. Then back to the beginning and thus 1-1 to 5-5 to 6-6 etc. Repeat this counting several times until the mind is reasonably collected and the awareness is reasonably steady. After that it is not necessary to count in pairs; count singly 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 etc. When the mind has become well-collected and the awareness is even, one should stop counting and one can just be aware of the breath at the tip of the nose or on the upper lip.

The counting method described above is the method taught by the teachers in the treatise of Visuddhi Magga (the Path of Purity). Other ways of counting may be used, such as 1-1 up to 10-10 and then come back to 1-1 again. One may count beyond 10-10, if one wishes. However, the teachers recommend counting up to 10-10 only because they think that counting to a much higher number than 10 would require too much contrived attention from the mind. So they recommend counting with a limit that does not require too much effort in counting. Another method recommended by the teachers is to say to oneself “Bud” on breathing in, and “dho” on breathing out. Thus Bud-dho, Bud-dho, etc. Dham-mo or Sangho may be used in the same way. When the mind has become collected, one stops saying to oneself Bud-dho etc., and one is aware of the air touching the tip of the nose or the upper lip. Practice this until the mind remains collected for a long while. What I have told you today is only the first steps of the drill. Let those interested in mental wholeness and mental purity (as well as success in study and work) put them into practice.

May all beings be free from enmity.

May they be happy and free from fear.