

## Introduction to Insight meditation

By U Silananda

Insight meditation is an awareness meditation. It teaches you to be with the present moment, to live in the present moment. It teaches to be aware of everything that comes to you and is happening to you. Only the present moment is important. And everything that comes to you at the present moment through the six sense doors—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind—is to be noted, to be watched, to be observed as the object of awareness.

When you practice Insight meditation, by making mental notes or just watching the various things that come to you, you will bring awareness to a high level so that you will be able to see things as they truly are. You will come to see the true nature of mind and body, of the mental and physical phenomena of which you are composed. "True nature" means the nature of impermanence, the nature of unsatisfaction, and the nature of insubstantiality or the absence of an unchanging self or soul. It is important to see these three characteristics of nature so that you can have a correct view of things, so that you may have less attachment to mind and body, and gradually be able to weaken the hold of mental defilements that prevent enlightenment.

When you practice insight meditation, you choose an object on which to focus your mind. That object will be the "home" object of meditation. Traditionally, the breath is taken as the object. You keep your mind focused on the breath and make mental notes "in-out-in-out" along with the breaths. During the notings of the breath when your mind gets lost or distracted, you make notes of them too, such as "thinking" or "hearing" or "distractions" or "emotions", etc. And also you make notes of the feelings in your body. In this way, you keep yourself aware of everything that is happening in you or that comes to you through the six sense doors.

By keeping your mind on the object of meditation, you are able to develop concentration or one-pointedness of mind which is necessary for the penetrative knowledge into the true nature of mind and body to arise. Without concentration this cannot happen. So what you need first is concentration. And in order to have concentration, you must first

keep your mind focused on one object. If you can keep your mind focused on one and the same object for some time you can get the necessary concentration. But you will find that in the beginning that is very difficult to do even for a short time. That is because you are dealing with the mind which is very unruly and difficult to control. You can keep a wild bull by tying it with ropes. But you cannot tie your mind with ropes, so you tie your mind to the object with awareness or mindfulness. In the beginning, mindfulness may not be strong enough to tie the mind down to one object and you may have many distractions to interfere with your meditation. But when distractions come to you, whether through the eyes, ears or nose, etc., do not get irritated or upset. Just turn them into the objects of meditation by making notes of them too.

The beauty of insight meditation lies in the fact that all things are the object for this meditation. The breath is only the "home" object. If you have no other object to note, just keep noting them too. Whether you are keeping your mind on the breath or on other distractions, you are doing good meditation if you are aware of them.

When you practice insight meditation, you have to be patient and persevere. And do not get discouraged, if you cannot get concentration at the beginning. Everybody has that experience. And leave all your expectations behind when you are meditating. Just be in the present moment. And if these thoughts come to you in spite of the instructions, just make them the object of meditation. In this way, you can effectively deal with everything that comes to you.