

Breathing with the Energy Body (Guided Meditation)

Practising the Jhānas

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In the second one, now we'll go to an energy body, whole body one. We'll do it as a guided meditation, just to give you a few ideas of what you can play with.

[00:49, guided meditation begins]

Okay. Remember, take that time to play with your posture. Sometimes when you're still getting used to all this, and working with the energy body towards *samādhi*, even micro-adjustments in the posture make quite a big difference, much more than you would think. I could say something about that. Maybe I'll say it on another occasion. Take your time with the posture. Just touching base with the sensations of contact, the feet or the legs, back or the backside on the chair, cushion, bench – whatever it is.

Feeling, sensing your posture. Sensing the uprightness, the alertness expressed in the posture. Sensing the resolve expressed in the posture. And at the same time, sensing, feeling, throughout the whole body space, the openness, the receptivity, the softness expressed in the posture. This ideal poise of the *citta* manifesting, expressing in the posture. The *citta* will shape the posture. The posture, to a certain extent, at least, will shape the *citta* – mutual dependent arising.

And the whole-body awareness. Really, again, spreading that attention over the whole space of the body, and even a little bit larger. Now, this attention will shrink so many times you can't count in one session. Not a problem. You just notice that. You open it up again. You fill that space with bright presence, alive sensitivity.

And here, working directly with the energy body, what we're interested in within that space is the texture of it, the vibration, the tone of it, the feel, the energy of it. It shrinks; you keep coming back to that.

When you feel ready, just allowing, supporting, encouraging the breath to be the longest possible comfortable breath. So really not a strain; just as long as is still comfortable – which may be much longer than you think, or that you're used to. And really not a lot of air. It's really quite a gentle, subtle breath, relatively speaking. A long, slow, smooth breath, in and out. And alive to the whole body space, the whole energy body.

As we explored briefly yesterday, you can tune in, if you like, to the sense of the whole space, the whole energy body expanding and contracting, and what that feels like throughout the whole space. And/or you could also pay attention, tune into, feel into the sense of the whole space being energized, feeling energized with the in-breath, and a kind of relaxation or letting go with the out-breath. Throughout the whole space, these are the energies, qualities, feelings, tones, vibrations, if you like, that you're tuning into, opening to.

And really let that long breath open up the body, open up the whole space. And again and again, opening up the attention, the awareness, to the whole space. Make sure your legs are breathing, are

being breathed, your feet. You may not have anatomical images of feet, or legs, or head, or whatever. That's fine. Just let that go, if they're not there, and you don't need to bring them back, or you may. But really the whole body is breathing. The whole body space is involved. Including the head, or where the head is, where the feet are, where the legs are – that region of the space, region of energy, region of vibration.

Okay. I'm going to do something a little bit different. We're going to take a little bit of a tour. So when you're ready, can you imagine the breath coming into the body, coming into the energy body space, at a point, let's say, a couple of inches to the side, or maybe a little bit below, as well, the navel, the belly button? It's probably not that helpful to imagine the breath as a kind of vapour like you see on a cold day when you breathe out, and the sort of water vapour and air, and that sort of swirling gas thing. Just what we're really interested in is, if I conceive of the breath coming in there, and just imagine that, how does it affect the whole energy, the whole space, the whole tone of the whole body? If you are visual, and you want to experiment with a visual thing, you could imagine the breath as a kind of column of light or beam of light coming in there, into the energy body. And how does it affect, how does it ripple out from there? What do you notice when you imagine that? Whole-body awareness.

But now, we don't have to be wedded to the longest breath. So there are two things to play with here: what do you notice when you imagine the breath coming in there? And also, what kind of breath does the body want coming in there? Is it a really long breath? Is it a much shorter breath? Somewhere in between? Is it a kind of fuller breath, or a very gentle, soothing breath? Don't be afraid to use your imagination to play. What do you notice in the whole body space, and what kind of breath just feels best? All very light, very playful. What do you notice in the whole space – its energy, its tones, its feeling? And what kind of breath feels best there?

When you're ready, leaving that point there, and imagining the breath coming in at a similar point on the right-hand side. So about two inches from the navel – doesn't have to be exact at all; just somewhere around there that feels kind of, "It's okay." Maybe a little bit lower. Whole body, whole energy body awareness, sensitive, bright. Sensitive to what the body wants, what kind of breath it wants there.

So construing the breath and construing the body as just energy. Both are energy. Imagining, sensing body and breath as energy. And feeling that, noticing what it feels like and what feels good, or as good as possible for right now. Whole-body awareness. Really opening up that attention, again and again, to the whole space. And opening up the whole body to the breath, to the breath energy.

When you're ready, the same thing, at a point, perhaps, in between. So on the midline of the body, perhaps a couple of inches or so down from the belly button, from the navel, somewhere around there. Doesn't have to be exact; just what feels kind of right. Same playing, same experiment, same sensitivity and questions for the whole body, for the whole energy body. Opening, opening.

And again, when you're ready, moving that point, the point at which we're construing, imagining, sensing the breath energy coming into the body, moving it up that midline to somewhere in the solar plexus area. How does it feel? What do you notice in the whole space, with the in-breath, with the out-breath construed, imagined, sensed there?

So there's really not a right and a wrong here. It might be you sense that whole space expanding, contracting, or energizing and relaxing. It might be that you notice certain currents through different

parts of the body. They may be different, as you breathe in and out, at different points. Whatever it is that you find helpful to tune into, to feel into, to open to.

When you're ready, just moving up a bit higher on that midline to the heart centre – somewhere on the midline around the level of the heart, or a little higher even.

If you're really into one of these points right now, you don't have to necessarily move on. We're just kind of doing a bit of a tour, if you want. You can stay with wherever you want to explore for a while, or what feels good. But if you want, you can move up now, and the breath, imagine it, construe it, sense it coming in the front of the throat. So not down from the mouth, but directly into the throat. What ripples out, then, from that point, through the whole energy body space? Those ripples might even extend out of the body, out of that space. Or they may circulate in the space. No right or wrong.

Again, if you want to, you can play with the idea, the image, the sense of the breath coming in at the crown of the head, down into the body space from there. So maybe your anatomy is clear. Maybe it's really not clear, or partially clear. It's not that important at this point. What happens, and what kind of breath does the body want, when it comes in there, when it goes out there? How does it feel, the whole space? The breath goes out, but we're paying attention to the space, and how the breath going out feels or affects the whole space. Light, playful, open, sensitive.

And if you want, how about the breath energy coming in and out of the energy body, of the whole body space, either at the base of the neck, somewhere around there, or even up at the occiput, the base of the skull, or somewhere in between? Just find a region there, and just play. How does that breath coming in there affect the front of the body? How does it affect the legs, the whole space? What kind of breath feels good? What kind of breath supports a sense of well-being in that space, just as much as that is possible right now?

How about, if you're ready, somewhere around the back of the heart, the back of the body, the breath energy coming in, going out there? Don't be afraid or concerned, "Am I imagining something?" If you imagine it first and then feel it, great. No problem. Imagining certain currents or whatever it is – it doesn't matter as long as the kinaesthetic sense gets involved, one way or another. There's that sensitivity to the feeling, the tone, the energy, currents if there are, vibration, texture.

Then, again, if you want to, if you feel ready, how about the breath energy coming in either at the sacrum or the tailbone, or some place around there, again, along the midline? Perhaps there are currents flowing down your legs, as well as up the back, at the same time, radiating out from that point. What kind of breath supports a sense of well-being, a feeling of well-being, just as much as possible?

And then, when you're ready, just staying with the whole space, that energy body awareness that expands over that whole area, the whole body, and letting the breath go, and just being with that sense of that space, the whole energy body. Let the breath do whatever it wants to do. No need to pay any attention particularly to the breath. You might notice it, of course, anyway, but just being aware of the whole vibration, texture, feel, energy, tone of the whole energy body right now.

[37:41, guided meditation ends]

And when you're ready, coming out of the meditation, opening the eyes. So you get the idea? Anything's possible here. There's no right or wrong. There's no order you need to go in if you're

moving around like this. You might find you want to stay at one point for a whole sitting because that's the juicy point, or that's the point where it's easiest for you. It could be anywhere, you know? Anything is possible. Experiment, yeah? You might have the breath coming up from the earth, through your feet, into the whole body. It might be from the middle of the body, that it kind of expands out. It's not even coming in from the outside. Or it might come in from 360 degrees. There's no limit to what's possible here.

[inaudible question from yogi] Thank you, yeah. So the question is, if I'm recommending one base practice, what we've just done, is that one, or does one point within there become a base practice? Actually, in a way, we've done a couple already of energy body breath meditations, and I would conceive of *that* as one base practice. That's why I said earlier today: why do I spend longer on the energy body practice? Because there are so many possibilities. So even within one sitting, you could do a tour like that, and then actually just go back to something like I'm just with the expansion/contraction, you know? But basically, you've got energy body, coupled with the breath – because we can also do it uncoupled from the breath, but right now it's coupled with the breath – and within that, it's a huge playground, and that's your base practice.

Now, you might find, over time, that there's one spot that, within your base practice, within your springboard practice, it's your base point. You're just there a lot because it seems to work for you. But again, you still want to be responsive, creative, etc., and all that, and it might be that you still want to explore other things, if that's what you're doing. In other words, this energy body breath practice is quite a big territory, with a lot of possibilities, and actually infinite and endless kind of possibilities. Basically, we could say you're construing of the breath as energy, and you're construing of the body as an energy body, and you're just playing with how those two kind of – I don't know what the word is – dance, move in and out of each other. And anything goes. And what you're paying attention to is what feels good, what's helpful in terms of – remember the Buddha's analogy of the soap ball, and the apprentice bathman, bathperson, just shaping it. That's kind of what you're doing. You're using the breath to shape that ball into what feels good. Does that make sense? Yeah? Okay. Derek, yeah?

[inaudible question from yogi] Yeah, okay. So Derek's saying sometimes you bring the *mettā* in, or it comes in? You bring the *mettā* in, and then you can't tell whether you're using one or the other? Do you mean that the *mettā* seems to follow the rhythm of the breath once you've started doing the *mettā* practice? Yeah. I'm not sure what to answer. In many respects, it's good to keep things separate, you know? But you may find that ... I think if you want to go deep in *mettā*, you probably want to eventually separate it from the breath, okay? Because you're going to get so deep that the breath actually stops. So you need to keep them separate. At the beginning, though, it might help – it's what I said earlier: it's like I'm just expecting to nail my attention to something, and it's going to take me into *samādhi*. Actually the exact ingredient that's missing might be just something that juicens up the heart a little bit. And now that might be the *mettā*. So you might be finding a particular key that works for you, but it's really got a larger context of, again, if you're a chef, you're just, "This needs a bit more" – whatever the *mettā* would be, pepper or whatever. It just needs a bit more, and you're just adding. It's kind of like that. So that's my initial answer, but it's probably a little bit complicated. Does that sound okay? Yeah?

[inaudible response from yogi] Yeah. I think it's good – I will say more about this later on – it's really good to be clear: "I'm doing *this*. This is primary." If I use something else, and perfectly legitimate – I drag in an insight practice – it's secondary, and I'm doing it for what reason? Because something's got stuck, because something's blocked, because I just need something to loosen. "This is primary, this is secondary." When that thing's loosened, I can let go of it, and I come back to my primary thing. Yeah? So let's maybe say it like that for now. Okay?

Okay. Is that good? I'd like to talk. This is the third part. [*transcriber's note: see the following dharma talk for part three*]