Open, Spacious Awareness Meditation

Jack Kornfield · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Jack Kornfield · 27:27

Let yourself find a way to sit that's stable and comfortable, where you can sit upright with a sense of alertness, but at the same time, a graciousness and ease, like the king or queen on the throne. You take your seat here halfway between heaven and earth in this human form and invite a sense of stillness and openness.

Tonight our meditation practice will have the qualities of equanimity and compassion. To begin, I invite you to reflect on the value of a peaceful heart. What is it like to have a peaceful heart among the worldly winds of praise and blame, gain and loss, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, fame and disrepute, birth and death? These are the worldly winds that constantly change. To have a peaceful heart in the midst of them all—steady, spacious, open. This is the invitation.

As it says in the Tao, there's a time for being ahead and a time for being behind. A time for being in motion and a time for being at rest. A time for being vigorous. A time for being exhausted. A time for being in danger. A time for being safe. For she who is centered in the Tao, she can go wherever she wishes without danger. She perceives the universal harmony even among the arising of pain and loss. For she has found the vast space and peace and rests in the Tao.

Let things quiet. Let the body begin to settle. The shoulders relax. The arms and hands rest easily. Let the eyes and face soften, loosen the jaw. Let the belly be soft and the breath natural. Let the heart be soft as well to receive all that arises with a spirit of compassion.

As you sit quietly, you can notice how the body breathes itself. This organism, this human body, this human incarnation, expanding, contracting, breathing in and out. Notice as you tune into the breath that the air is not just inside you, but all around you coming in and out. There's an ocean, a vast sky. And the breath is breathing in and out in the ocean and the vast sky—the shared breath that is breathed by all living beings.

When you breathe out, it becomes part of the in-breath of the little girl getting put to sleep in your neighborhood, and the raccoons who play with your trash cans, and the deer in the hillsides. Breathing together.

With each breath, allow the sense of vastness and openness to grow. Make your mind like the sky, without boundaries, vast, open. You become the space of loving awareness, of mindful loving awareness that feels how the body breathes itself, inter-breathes with all life.

You are the space of awareness through which float thoughts and images and words like clouds. Just as

the breath comes and goes, rises and passes, so too the clouds of thoughts appear—words and images—and then vanish. You are the vast stillness. Mindful loving awareness like the sky.

Love and longing may appear and disappear. Fears and worries can arise for a time, feelings and thoughts, and then they vanish. You are the vastness, the vast space of mindful loving awareness. This is the peaceful heart—the vast open heart, open mind.

You are not this body. You are not the thoughts or feelings and emotions that arise. You are consciousness itself. You are the loving awareness. The consciousness that was born into this body—timeless consciousness, vast and open, taking many forms, yet not limited by them in any way.

Rest in loving awareness. Rest open.

Allowing for all things, yet not limited by them.

You are the Buddha resting in vastness, seeing the arising and passing of all things with a great heart of compassion—peaceful in the midst of it all.

Let your mind be open like the sky: peaceful, compassionate, and tender, allowing for all things to rise and pass. You are the wise and compassionate witness to it all.

From a place of vast peace, the Buddha surveyed the threefold world with the eyes of compassion and saw beings who are lost and confused in fear and greed and hate and anger, causing suffering for themselves and others. And he let the vast space of awareness be filled with compassion to hold them, to teach as many as he could, to remind them of who they really are—their innate nobility and freedom—and to send compassion and love and blessings in every direction, as you can do now.

May we rest in vast compassion and wisdom amidst it all.

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