

Our Daily Breaks

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

If at home or at work and alone, we decide to have a cup of tea, herbal or proper, or coffee - with a biscuit. How can we turn that into a Dhamma practice? First of all there is the intention. Always, the intention needs to be investigated. It may not be a physical thing. The body does not need tea and definitely not coffee. Nor does it need a biscuit. In fact bread and water will do. Is it just greed, then? How do we feel if we say – yes it is greed? Sad? Sad at losing those little delicious moments that brighten up the day. Sad, knowing at the same time that we simply can't renounce tea and biscuits and that this may very well be the great stumbling block on our way to Nibbana? Tea or Nibbana, is that the question? First, let us remember that the Buddha did not teach 'self-mortification'. In other words, he did not say that pleasure in itself was unwholesome, unless unethical of course. Taking pleasure in pinching someone else's biscuit - and eating it, is surely 'taking what is not freely given'. Now pleasure brings happiness. It affects our mental state. Happiness, born of pleasure that is not by way of indulgence, has in turn a good effect on the body. So let us use this occasion to establish a wholesome state of mind. To do everything deliberately and with a sense of ease, we stop and make clear to ourselves our intention - to turn this tea break into a delightful ceremony. Having chosen the beverage, why not stand sentinel at the kettle and wait for it to boil, continuing to let go of any agitation. Wait till the boiling has all but stopped. Take time to make the drink. Stir the drink gently and quietly as an expression of our mental state. Sit comfortably and gaze upon the tea and biscuit. Contemplate all the labour and expense involved - and the wonder of nature. We pay full attention to the process, to the tasting. We feel the bodily pleasure. We experience the mental state. Sip after sip, nibble upon nibble, we bring delight to the body, delight to the mind. Sip after sip, nibble upon nibble, we take the opportunity to share our joy with others. Family, friends, colleagues ... all beings. May you be joyful! May your joy increase! We sit with the empty cup and the plate, dotted with crumbs. How do we feel coming to the end? Are we still aching for more, just one more biscuit? Was there some subliminal desire that now arises as unsatisfactoriness? Are we suffering the consequences of not acknowledging our indulgence? Does an existential angst arise at the thought that all good things also come to an end? Or is there a quiet joy arising from an act well completed? Or perhaps we are sitting with a heart aglow with gratitude? Or simply at ease. The body still, the heart calm and the mind silent and spacious. Ready and open to the next moment. Let this be our aspiration: Oh, may my life end like this!

Transcriptions produced locally using Swiss low-carbon electricity. Corrections and rewriting by cloud-hosted AI.