

# BEFORE AND AFTER MEDITATION · SETTING THE SCENE (POO1)

◀ Practice Series ❖  Video ▶  Audio ▶

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If you're keen on meditating – there are some best practices that help you stay in the zone. Overview of supporting works before and after a session of meditation. Including:

- Dedicating Place and Time
- Seat and Scene of Practice
- Basic Purification
- Meditation Postures



- Initial Breathing
- Invocation / Declaration of Intent
- Practice of Meditation Proper
- Post-Meditation Phase of Reflection
- Dedication / Affirmation of Practice

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Greetings from the work-in-progress realm here. We want to cover a couple of things concerning – not the practice of meditation itself – but the things we do before and after a session that both support the session of contemplation we are about to have and that, after the fact, help us absorb, establish everything that we've gone through.

## **The Framing – Establish Your Space and Time**

Now, as the very first thing, you want to find some sort of a space, right? A peaceful little corner in your house that you dedicate just for your practice. Or if you're on the road, just find a place that seems appropriate, has a basically peaceful vibration. Is not absolutely in the middle of everything, preferably has nice airflow so you get your oxygen in and out, instead of getting tired and lethargic while doing your practice.

And also, where possible, set a time, both a regular time of the day – suppose, wake up in the morning and brush my teeth and whatever that I may do, and then I'll go

to my corner and sit down for a little session. And again in the evening, when things have settled down, I'll go back to my meditation cave, wherever I set camp, and have a session.

And, okay, I'll do it for 20 minutes, I'll do it for 30 minutes, I'll do it for an hour. Initially, do set a time so your mind knows it's going to be doing its work, it's not going to be wiggling for *"are we done yet, is this enough yet, maybe should be a little more"*. It doesn't need to engage in the dialogue. When the bell rings, then it's done – and until then it's not done, and it can just shut up and do what it's supposed to be doing, all right.

Now that time, set it to a length where you are comfortable, where at least half of it is a meaningful experience, after trialing with a particular time period for a while. Suppose every half-an-hour session that you make, if you get to a point where 15 minutes is quality, then that's an okay time. If you start getting closer to your cap, then extend the time, make it 45, make it an hour. If you're getting 45 minutes out of an hour of quality time, you're doing pretty good.

So that's there, time and space, right.

## **Seat and Setting – Configuring Your Space**

Now within that space of yours, you want to have a couple of basic things to set the scene, right. For example, in here I've got a fabric or a seat. It's good to have a seat on which you sit down for your practice, all right. Gives you a contained space, gives you a certain peace of mind. There's a little, simple little ritual that is being accomplished here.

Then suppose you've got some pictures that you like, here you go. Set something up that reminds you of your orientation, your objectives, something that stands for the ideals that you're looking for.

You have incense, light up some incense. Incense is a symbol of the essence of the Earth transforming, being released into the sky of our inner space, the release of our practice into the universe, whatever.

## **Basic Purification – Body and Mind Cleansed**

Okay, and you will also want to do a certain purification before you get going. For example, if you've got water from a holy spring, from the bat cave or another water source that you find meaningful, that you have a

relationship with, use that. Otherwise, any old, clean, pure water, have it there.

And before you start, take a bit, wash your hands, your face, your eyes, nose, ears, mouth and skin. Sprinkle around a bit for good measure, feet, hands, if you want to sprinkle on your chakras or your belly button, that's a choice. Also a couple of drops on your seat, on your setup, so you're all refreshed in here.

We wash away what was before and we enter clean into what is to come, all right? Water is life, water is purity, okay? If you don't happen to have a water, or if you don't happen to have any of this setup, they can all be filled in by your intent, your concentration.

Suppose I didn't have a bottle of water, don't have a seat – so okay, in my mind's eye, I have laid out a seat for me to sit on, a peaceful place, all right? And again, I didn't have the water, so in here, I am under a waterfall, the water is pouring through me, all of my body, exiting through the fingers, exiting through the toes, pouring out from every pore of my being.

And with that water, I'm cleansed. Or here, the wind flows, carries away all of my pollution. With my breath,

I have cleansed. The intention is what counts, all right?  
So, there's the cleansing.

## **Sitting Meditation – How to Sit Properly**

After that, we will want to sit down. You might be facing your setup, I'm going to be facing the camera so you can actually see what's going on here.

Now, here we're talking about sitting meditation – we're talking about sitting, standing, laying down and walking, each of which have their pros and cons – but here we're specifically looking at the premium practice, the high concentration session of sitting.

Now, you may sit in a full lotus, if you're happy with that. If that's difficult then sit in a half-lotus, sit in the Burmese monks [position, they] like to do this, that's a more comfortable position.

What's important is that your back's reasonably straight here, your shoulders are upright, you're not slumping, you're not a hunchback – that will simply result in a lot of pain. If you've got back problems, put some padding under your bum, try to find a position that is comfortable for a duration of time, okay?

## Settling In – Initial Breath and Relaxation

And once you settle into your position, just go through your body, relax the tensions. You're not holding tightness in your shoulders, in your arms, in your legs, in your belly, chest, or your head, or your jaws. Everything is relaxed, so it can actually be comfortably still. Alright? This they call *asana*, the posture. Asana or posture is not a hundred gymnastic motions that are clocked over and over again. Asana is the base of contemplation. All right?

And after that, you take a couple of peaceful, natural breaths in, and then holding up to your capacity. When it starts to want to pour out naturally, you pour it out. You may do it through your mouth, you may do it through your nose, that's optional.

I like to use the nostrils, my nose, for both the inhale and the exhale. I find that it better links, connects, pacifies the mind, but if you have a lot of stress, a lot of tension that you really need to sigh out, then do that, that's also fine, valid. Whatever it is that you actually need, right?

Okay, so, and a couple of those breaths – these breaths can even be a little bit exaggerated. You want to feel the breath, you want to touch the breath, you want to have it sinking in, and you want to feel the reverberation of the breath in your body, in your head. And you will find that it is zoning you into a more contained headspace – and you're beginning to withdraw from the world of sensations out there, from the memories of what you did before, from the dreams of what you're going to do after.

All of that, let it go – there is no past, there is no future, there is just right now, right here, where I am. There is no there and there, and there is only here, and there is only what I am about to do. Okay?

## **Invocation – Your Intention and Supporting Fields**

Now, after that, we have set our space, we have done basic calibrations, and we are almost good to get going. It is good to do a certain invocation, declaration of intent, and also a prayer, if you will, a request, calling out for support. Not that you need to call out to something out there, a deity in the heavens that you have never-ever encountered. These are simply

affirmations, requests for support from the internal reality, the fields of awareness, already present in us, but not crystallized, not accessible yet. Okay?

So, we do the invocation, something like as follows:

*I am present and here again  
returning to good inner works.  
Let my body be still and at peace  
as the support of a balanced earth.  
Let my heart feel calm and joy  
as the currents of a serene lake.  
Let my mind grow clear and bright  
as the halo of the sun and moon.  
Let my spirit move free and unbound  
as the celestial journey of the wind.  
Veil will be shattered,  
mirror will shine,  
revealing the inner  
and outer entwined.  
I am now here,  
I will practice indeed,  
and nothing else will I heed or need.*

For example, something like that. That is an example that I sketched together. It covers our basic assertion

of being present here. It touches upon the four elements and brings them further closer toward us – Water, Earth, Fire, Wind – that are present in our bodies, in our minds, supporting our practice, stimulating our evolution.

Then we do declare a certain objective – that this veil blinding us, leading to our confusion, should be shattered, should be severed, should be cut, should be lifted – so that we may clearly see, that we may clearly feel, that we may clearly understand ourselves and the world out there.

That the mind should become like a mirror, clear, free of dust, reflecting whatever that is out there, reflecting whatever that is in here – exactly as it is, becoming a mirror of actuality. And through that, coming to a natural spontaneous understanding of the nature of things and the dynamism of things – without the need for an intellectual analytical process. Rather, direct experience. Later, certainly, we can explain it through a rational process – but what counts is the actual immediate understanding.

All right, so we have a declaration of our intention, invocation if you will.

## Primed for Practice – Breath and Somatic Tuning

After that, another couple of breaths. Peaceful we are again. Not invoking all day long, invocation done. And I am withdrawing again into my internal space, breathing just as we did before. Peaceful, natural breathing, no need to force the breathing. Just breathing calmly, pleasant – and then we may begin our meditation.

Your hands on the sides, palms up, palms down – like this, like this, some like to do this, some like to do this. [As shown in the video.] That is an option, these are all options, this is an option, you have so many options that you can play with. You will find that they each, the postures of the hands, create a different feel. For example, you are simply being neutral; in here you are receiving; in here you are concentrating; in here you are holding the experience in the palms of your hand, being peaceful. Experimenting, and then embark on your practice.

You may also just continue with breathing. Attending to the breath at your nostrils, going in, going out. Or attending to the feeling of the breath in your throat, rising and falling through the elevator, the windpipe in

here. Or your chest and your lungs expanding and contracting. Staying with that sensation, or breathing all the way in with your abdomen, rising and falling.

You may also simply attend to the rising and falling of the abdomen with your breath – or you may follow through the entire body of the breath, from the beginning to the end.

Initially you can also use your hands to remind you of the course of the breath and to give you one more line, one more vector of concentration to engage the mind. But at some point you will want to stop your hands, settle down, and have your mind contained in the breath itself. Or you may engage in the practice of your mantra, perhaps out loud, or whispering, an intermediate practice – or entirely within your mind, the sound being made, echoing in your internal chamber, on and on to you. Fut flowing constantly.

These are different modes. Each of them can be experimented with – and there is a progression of deepening. All of these have their pros and cons, all of them can be engaged in, should be experimented with.

## **Types of Meditation – Into the Four Elements**

Or I may engage in other types of contemplative meditational practice. I may be contemplating on the elements.

Earth beneath me, my support, stillness, gravity, substance. I am stillness itself, immobile, firm like a mountain made of solid rock. Nothing will move me, my mind will not move – I am Earth itself. Or I am the stream of Water – I am fluid, I am flexible, I am adaptable, I have cohesion in my being. I flow seamlessly.

Or Fire – the grasping, transforming force that is present in our bodies, that is shining in the sky as the sun, light, heat, the metabolic process, suffusing our bodies. Making life possible, turning cold into heat, turning heat into life. The fire of life – that Fire is within me, and I hold the Fire, and I engage it.

Or the Wind that expands from one reach of the world to another, that flows, much like a waterfall, but flows and passes around everything, and expands in all directions – that is liberation itself, if it were a force of nature.

The elements, we can contemplate on the elements. These are all good, you will find that they each bring you something different, and when you hold them together, you will have a base, a grounding in the very fundamental factors and bases of nature, of life itself, of consciousness itself.

And again, many other possible contemplations, methods of meditation that you may experiment with, that you may study, and see where they take you. We will be exploring them in due time, to create a well-rounded selection of methods that can be applied based on your present need, the present situation, the present state of the mind. Okay?

### **Concluding the Session – Reflect and Absorb the Contrast**

Okay, we're concluding. We have done our active practice, we are at the end of our session. Now, by all means, don't get up right away and start being a busy bee, running after the next possible thing that your mind wants to pursue.

Take a moment, reflect, absorb, retain. There is a certain afterglow and a certain resonation – a presence

in your body and your mind. Something has changed, something is different. Feel the difference. Keep it, hold it, remember it – and carry that impact from your meditation into your everyday life.

There is a certain peace and there is a certain wisdom that will follow you – if you take the time to absorb. If you just get up right away, things will evaporate, things will fade away – because you have not taken the time to let it sink in. Okay?

### **Session Closure – Dedication and Affirmation**

After that, it's good to have a certain dedication, a certain affirmation of what has been done, of what it should add up to. Something like this:

*So I conclude.*

*I'm closer to peace,  
my wisdom has grown.*

*My skill has increased,  
my nature was shown.*

*This practice has merit  
for me, one and all.*


*May all beings inherit  
what the wise ones recall.*

*All is well  
as the world must go on.  
Breaking my shell,  
I am always reborn.  
So I continue.*

That's just an example – feel free to craft your own.

And may there be benefit, both to me and to all other sentient beings, equally. May all things improve in this world and within me as the result of this practice. It's a simple, sincere expression at the conclusion of your practice. Okay?

After that, you're welcome to continue, wrap up, fold your seat, move on to the next thing. Until we meet again in the evening – and continue our practice. Okay?

 <https://ananda.icu/talks/practice-series/p001-before-and-after-meditation-setting-the-scene>