

## **The Way of the Breath**

Life is symbolized by the breath. It is in experiencing your breath that you experience your life! So, let us just sit quietly, back straight, hand in a meaningful position (cosmic Mudra) and simply become aware of your breathing. We are breathing all the time, but mostly not aware of it, unless we become anxious, then our breath becomes short and shallow.

Just be aware of the breath nothing more. Don't force anything just be aware....Breath gently and slowly and silently: Feel the warm air pass through your nostrils. You could begin with this very simple mantra: I breathe in I breathe out, in out in out. In doing this you're already doing an ancient practice.

We breathe from the abdomen. Feeling the abdomen rise and fall gently and slowly.

Awareness of the breath is not attained overnight, it's actually quite difficult as you will find.

The Hebrews believed that their breath was the breath of God whose breath gave them life. For us as Christians the breath is also deeply symbolic; like the wind, it symbolises the Holy Spirit giving life to all things.

You might like to use another simple mantra to help you stay focussed like 'Come Holy Spirit' or the name of Jesus, or Love or Peace. The word can help you when your mind wanders, and it will wander. When it wanders you simply return to breath, no matter how many times. Back to the breath, back to your mantra. There will come times when you persevere that you will let go of everything, mantra and awareness of the breath and simply sit. This is what the Japanese call Shikantaza or just sitting. It takes time to learn. Then the mind can become like a still pond without even a ripple.

In this stillness the mind becomes spacious, vast, like space! Silent and deep. All things emerge from the great Silence!

This is the path of Contemplative prayer. If this time of silence ever brings anxiety just repeat the word of the Lord: 'Do not be anxious, do not be afraid'. Or, as St Peter said to the Lord on Mount Tabor: 'Lord it is good for us to be here'

Remember how Jesus breathed on his apostles with the words 'Receive the Holy Spirit' . Cannot we too simply sit and breathe good will and healing to those who may receive it, sending them the Holy Spirit . Or we can breathe love and healing to our loved ones and friends in this most symbolic of actions.

Let us now just hear the sound of the Bell. Just hear the Bell.