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# Mindful Living in Practice

## Inner Peace & Joyful Living

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A retreat with  
**Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche**



5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2019  
India International Centre, New Delhi





# *Mindful Living in Practice*

Inner Peace & Joyful Living

A retreat with  
Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche

5 and 6 October, 2019

Kamaladevi Complex, India International Centre  
40 Max Mueller Marg  
New Delhi 110003

Organised by  
Ritinjali and Centre for Escalation of Peace in  
collaboration with Vikramashila Foundation India



Rinpoche guides the participants through a sound meditation session

## Mindful Living in Practice – Inner Peace and Joyful Living:

A retreat with Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche

Ritinjali and Centre for Escalation of Peace in collaboration with Pallavan Learning Systems and Vikramashila Foundation organized a retreat on 'Mindful Living in Practice' with Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche. The two-day retreat on *Inner Peace* and *Joyful Living* took place at the India International Centre on October 5 and 6, 2019.

Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche is a world-renowned teacher and master of the Karma Kagyu and Nyingma lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. Born in Nepal in 1975, he possesses a rare ability to present the ancient Indian and Tibetan wisdom in a fresh, engaging manner. Most uniquely, Rinpoche's teachings weave together his own personal experiences with modern scientific research.

His best-selling book, *The joy of Living: Unlocking the Secret and Science of Happiness*, debuted on the New York Times bestseller list and has been translated into over twenty languages. His other books include *Turning Confusion into Clarity: A Guide to the Foundation Practices of Tibetan Buddhism*, *Joyful Wisdom: Embracing Change and Finding Freedom* and an illustrated children's book entitled *Ziji: The Puppy that Learned to Meditate*.

His latest book, *In Love with the World: A Monk's Journey Through the Bardos of Living and Dying*, was launched at the retreat.

### Day 1:

Mr Kapur welcomed the participants to the retreat and gave a short introduction of Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche. He then talked about the various organizations

behind the retreat – Ritinjali, Centre for Escalation of Peace, Pallavan Learning Systems and Vikramashila Foundation – and discussed the rationale behind organizing such a retreat. Following that, he invited the Rinpoche to start the two-day retreat.

Rinpoche began the session by saying that ‘awareness’ is the focus of the day. Addressing one of the questions submitted by the participants, he asked, ‘how can one be happy 24/7?’ Rinpoche discussed the research done in the US about happiness and lottery winners. It was found that lottery winners become happy but only for a short duration, after which they return to their initial level of happiness.

Rinpoche then discussed his experience with the scientific research of 2002 that studied the brain using MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) and EEG (Electroencephalogram). The study that looked at long-term meditators saw the presence of neuroplasticity and neuropathways. Earlier, it was believed that the brain cannot change but now it is agreed that it is possible not only to change the behaviour but also the structure of the brain. Meditation can change the baseline of the brain. Meditation can help practice the mind to be happier which can lead to a healthy body and a good life.

Responding to the question, ‘how can one be happy 24/7?’ he said that there is no fixed answer to be found in the outside world. The answer is within us. The key to long lasting happiness is within each one of us. Real happiness is being like the sky (indestructible) and being fully aware of our mind. The definition of the mind is ‘here and knowing’. When we truly understand

our minds, ‘ups and downs’ in the outside world do not affect the mind. When we recognize our minds, we realize that actual ‘ups and downs’ in life is good. They are like waves but we need to know how to ride the waves. True happiness comes from the recognition and connection with our enlightened nature that already exists within us. Awareness is the key to achieving that. When we are truly aware, traits such as freedom, liberation, compassion, love and happiness automatically manifest.

It is important to realize that the essence of meditation is awareness. Inner peace and joy are the experiences that come with meditation but the true essence is awareness. Awareness is knowing – knowing what you are seeing, smelling, feeling and thinking. While doing breathing meditation, it is important to know that you are breathing and the sensation associated with it. There will be other thoughts that fill the mind but we should not remove our focus from our breathing. One of the major misconceptions regarding meditation is that we have to think of nothing. That is not possible. We simply need to be aware of our breath even though there are distractions.

Then, Rinpoche led the participants through a body scanning meditation.

He informed the audience that there are two types of meditation – formal and informal. In formal meditation, the posture is important along with the need to be still. During informal meditation, we do not worry about the posture. Both types are important because formal meditation teaches technique while informal meditation allows us to apply or transform



Participants are asked to focus on their breath as part of the breathing meditation practice



Rinpoche engages the audience in an interactive session

that technique according to the situation. Informal meditation allows one to meditate anywhere and anytime.

It was explained that the causes of suffering are ignorance, aversion and craving. That is why awareness is the first step to getting free from suffering. Once we are aware and learn how to observe our mind, aversion and craving subside or does not affect our minds anymore. We then begin to understand the concepts of impermanence, interdependence and multiplicity.

Then, Rinpoche conducted a breathing meditation for the participants.

Rinpoche asked the following question and directed the participants to discuss in pairs.

‘The essence of meditation is awareness. We have awareness all the time. Does that mean we are meditating all the time? Please discuss.’

After the discussion, the responses from the participants were:

- We need to be aware of our own awareness – that is actual awareness
- Our daily (superficial) awareness is delayed
- Ultimate awareness is whether we respond from a place of knowing or from a place of ignorance, aversion and craving

Then, Rinpoche explained that we all have awareness in us already but we need to recognize that awareness and maintain that recognition. That is the start of the meditation practice. Wisdom is the recognition of awareness. After being aware, we need to make a

conscious effort to deal with aversion and craving. With ultimate awareness, aversion and craving will not affect our minds.

After that, Rinpoche led the participants through a sound meditation.

Rinpoche explained that in life, we need to find the right balance and understand that letting go does not mean giving up. In everything we do, we should not be too tight (too much effort) or too loose (no effort, unsure) but instead put in the right amount of effort (balance).

In order to find out which meditation technique is the right one for us, Rinpoche informed that there are three types of personalities:

- Body personality – responds to form, colour and shape
- Speech personality – responds to words
- Mind personality – responds to feeling, intuition and sensation

Most of us are a combination of these three types. We need to decide which meditation techniques are the best for us depending on our inclinations and switch up the routines accordingly.

Rinpoche shared his experience with panic attacks that led him to start meditating. For him, a panic attack was the aversion that he wanted to get rid of. Similarly, all of us suffer from the ‘monkey mind’ inflicted with anxiety, anger and depression. The ‘monkey mind’ is always in need of stimulation and oscillate between aversion and craving. As a topic of discussion for the next day, Rinpoche asked the participants to think about how to

deal with our 'monkey mind'.

Then, Rinpoche conducted a mental recitation meditation for the participants.

Q & A session:

Q. How do we stay in the state of awareness?

A. Practice is the answer. We need to keep on repeating the technique.

Meditating for 2/3 minutes a day can help in building mental hygiene. At the same time, it helps us to be healthy, which reflects in our physical appearance.

Q. Can we get to a stage where there are no thoughts?

A. No. There will always be thoughts but we can get to a stage where we do not emphasize on the thoughts. We need to realize that being free from thought does not mean there is no thought.

Q. Is laziness ok? How can we get rid of it?

A. It is said that the brain is one of the laziest tissues in our body. That is why we need to train our brains if we don't want to be lazy. We have three types of mind – reasoning (thinking) mind, feeling mind and habitual mind. If we want to inculcate a certain habit, we need to ensure that it features in the habitual mind naturally, which takes effort and practice.

Q. What are some of the techniques of sound meditation?

A. We can begin by listening to natural sound and then move on to other sounds. However, the sounds should not distract us from focusing on the meditation and staying aware.

Q. What are the keys to a successful relationship?

A. We need to accept that 'ups and downs' are a natural part of life, in addition to striving to get to know each other in an authentic way. We also need to accept life as impermanent.

## DAY 2

Recapitulating the salient points from the previous day, Rinpoche said that we are all innately good and have awareness and wisdom within us, but we need to recognize that nature in us. We all have in us unlimited capacity, talent and potential. But without awareness, our mind remains small, sensitive and confused.

From the previous day, the theory (views) that we learnt or have a cognitive understanding of included:

1. Awareness and wisdom (knowing) are like the sky that is always present and indestructible. Our thoughts/emotions and issues/problems are like clouds that are transient
2. Our innate nature – we all have awareness in us already
3. Essence of meditation is awareness
4. Purpose of meditation is to recognize that awareness and maintain that recognition
5. The mind is like a lamp and has the capacity for self-luminosity and self-clarity

The techniques of meditation participants learnt the previous day included:

1. Body Scanning
2. Breathing
3. Sound
4. Mental Recitation



Mingyur Rinpoche sits with Kabir Sexana to discuss his latest book



Participants learn a meditation technique focused on the awareness of sensation

Rinpoche told the participants that the theory and techniques of meditation from the previous day can be applied on a day-to-day basis for joyful living. We need to be aware of our sensations and recognize that there are three worlds – outer world (environment), inner world (body) and secret world (mind). Emotions such as stress, depression, anger and jealousy manifest as sensations in our body. These sensations over time become habits or beliefs. While reasoning and intellectualizing can help to an extent, we need to delve deeper in order to deal with these sensations in an effective manner. Meditation with awareness can be the solution.

Rinpoche explained that when we meditate and observe our sensations, two things might happen – sensations may disappear or we are able to recognize our sensations and create a space (gap) between the sensations and ourselves. It is important we understand that there is no need to get rid of the sensations; we simply need to observe. Our approach should be, 'I will not try to chase the sensations away but learn how to live with them'. Over time, the symptoms may still be there but we will be able to befriend the sensations – as a result, aversion and craving will subside. Also, in time, we will be able to make our sensations the object of our meditation.

Then, Rinpoche guided the participants through a meditation technique focused on the awareness of sensation.

Rinpoche explained that meditation is like learning the skill of life. It is the method that guides us towards being fully aware and effectively controlling aversion

and craving. Meditation inculcates the concept of balance in us so that we are able to let go but not give up. The act of repetition and a strict adherence to the technique builds our capacity to train our minds.

Then, Rinpoche asked the participants if they had thought about the question from the previous day, 'how can we deal with our 'monkey mind'? He explained that the best way to deal with the 'monkey mind' is to befriend it. In order to do that, we will need to understand it and what it requires. Since the 'monkey mind' needs constant stimulation and something to do at all times, we need to give it a task. In the beginning, the task could be something simple but over time, the task needs to be aligned to the habits we want to inculcate. In the process, we will realize that the bigger task we give it, the more we are able to control it. Meditation is one of the best tools we have of mastering the 'monkey mind'.

He explained that in the beginning, it will be difficult to control the 'monkey mind' because it will constantly oscillate between aversion and craving. We need to realize that the idea is not to abandon or try to block thoughts or emotions. Instead, we need to get to a point where we understand that these thoughts and emotions are transient and do not affect our mind. The natural liberation of our mind from our thoughts and emotions is the best way to tame the 'monkey mind'.

Rinpoche reiterated that meditation leads to the recognition of our awareness and grants us freedom from our 'monkey mind'. Those who are new to meditation should start by doing it for a short time and then slowly increase the time as they become more

accustomed to it. It is generally believed that it takes around 30 days for an activity to become a habit; the same is for meditation. Also, in order to develop a habit for informal meditation, it could be useful to pair it with an existing habit, such as performing it every time you open the door or look at the phone.

Rinpoche then noted that there are three levels of awareness:

- Normal awareness – day-to-day thinking, feeling, sensing
- Meditative awareness – consciousness, non-judgmental
- Awareness beyond awareness – beyond consciousness, achieved through Vipassana

As one begins to understand the technique of meditation and follow it with strict discipline, the journey leads to the true understanding of these various levels of awareness. At the highest point, one gains primordial wisdom that the mind has the capacity for self-luminosity and self-clarity. It is at this point that one is able to comprehend that awareness and emptiness are intrinsically connected.

In conclusion, Rinpoche noted that meditation is the tool to realizing our true nature and understanding our mind. We already have awareness and wisdom within us but we need to recognize them and maintain that recognition. With the help of meditation, that recognition can be achieved. Then, we will be able to experience joyful living by understanding our true nature that is innately good and blessed with unlimited capacity, talent and potential.

Q & A session:

Q. Is it better to focus on our breath or our bodily sensation?

A. It depends from people to people. But it is usually more effective to focus on sensation. However, if the sensation gets too overwhelming, let it go. We need to deal with it in an incremental manner.

Q. What is the true purpose of life?

A. The true purpose of life is to find your true nature (within) and then help others (outward)

Q. How can we get rid of negative feelings and foster positive ones?

A. First of all, we need to realize that humans are often critical of themselves. We see 90% of our negative qualities and only 10% of our positive qualities. One of the best ways to foster positive feelings is to perform the gratitude exercise. At the same time, we need to be aware of, recognize and appreciate that the first truth of Buddhism is suffering. With that realization comes the comprehension that we need to understand the true nature of our mind for joyful living.

Q. Is it okay to enjoy joyful emotions?

A. Yes, it is perfectly okay to enjoy joyful emotions and feelings. However, it needs to be coupled with the understanding that these emotions and feelings are impermanent. We cannot be attached to them. We need to realize that life is full of 'ups and downs'.



Mr Arun Kapur delivers the Thank You note after a successful two-day retreat with Mingyur Rinpoche

