

## **Study Questions:**

### **Karida Buddhist Sangha Beginning Meditation Course**

Aitken, Robert. Taking the Path of Zen. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1982

The purpose of these study questions is to prompt you to think about the writings. Feel free to discuss any of these questions with a Karida mentor through email. You may want to print out these pages to go into a notebook. This is also a convenient place to keep any responses your mentor may make.

#### **1. Fundamentals**

Aitken Roshi speaks of becoming fully absorbed in a task. Can you find examples in your own life? What was the experience like?

#### **2. Fundamentals**

"Breath counting is not the kindergarten of Zen. For many students it is a full and complete lifetime practice." Write about some of your own experiences with counting your breath.

#### **3. Fundamentals**

"The myth of the Buddha is my own myth." Assume that the Buddha never lived. How might his fictional story parallel your own life?

#### **4. Method**

"Don't condemn yourself for the normal condition." What is the best method for overcoming this universal tendency?

### **5. Method**

Stretches are important before your meditation practice. For your actual meditation, try the Burmese style, seiza style, or a chair. Which of these is best for you? Why?

### **6. Method**

The first practice is counting the breath from one to ten. Inhalation is counted as one and exhalation is counted as two. Describe your success, or lack of same, at this task.

### **7. Appropriate Means**

Aitken Roshi emphasizes the need for "a supportive local environment." How can you implement some of his ideas into your life?

### **8. Appropriate Means**

At the end of this chapter you are asked to count only your exhalations. Does this practice change your meditation in any way?

### **9. Delusions and Pitfalls**

Several types of delusions and difficulties are described in this chapter. Which of these present challenges for your own meditation? Describe.

### **10. Delusions and Pitfalls**

At the end of this chapter you are asked to count only your inhalations. Does this practice change your meditation in any way?

### **11. Attitudes in Religious Practice**

Several different approaches to practice are described in this chapter. Can you currently identify with any of them?

### **12. Attitudes in Religious Practice**

At the end of this chapter you are asked not to count but just to follow your breaths. Does this practice change your meditation in any way?

### **13. The Three Treasures**

Can you imagine and describe modern non-religious parallels to the “Three Treasures?”

### **14. The Three Treasures**

At the end of this chapter you are asked to just sit with no themes, numbers, or thoughts. Does this practice change your meditation in any way?

### **15. The Ten Grave Precepts**

Do you sense any difference between these Precepts and the Ten Commandments? If so, in what ways are they different?

### **16. Establishing the Practice**

In what sense is a meditation teacher different from the classical role of the Guru?

### **17. Establishing the Practice**

At the end of this chapter you are asked to return to the practice of counting the breath from one to ten. Which one of the various techniques has worked best for you?

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