



MINDFULNESS OF BREATHING

(Ānāpānasati)

by

Ven. Ācariya Buddhadasa

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Translated

by

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INTRODUCTION

I went to Suanmokkhabalārāma Grove to participate in the 68th birthday anniversary of Ven. Ācariya Buddhādāsa. The occasion was celebrated by keeping fast on the 27th day of May, 1974. I offered my services to help mark the occasion. Ven. Ācariya Buddhādāsa said, "Just two days ago, I gave a talk on Ānāpānasati. Everyone seemed very satisfied with the talk. Could you translate it into English for the good of the many".

That very day, I asked my friend, Ven. Kosol Kosalo, to transcribe the talk from the tape. As he began the transcription, I started the translation.

I am grateful to my friend in the dhamma, Ven. Piyānanda Bhikkhu, a Canadian monk, who painstakingly improved the style of my English wherever deemed necessary.

The first volume of Ānāpānasati by Ven. Ācariya Buddhādāsa has already been published in English. The second and third volumes are in the process of publication. This present booklet can be regarded as a condensed version of the first volume.

The reader is requested to become well-established in the practice of the first tetrad of Mindfulness of Breathing (as explained in this booklet). Then he will find the next two volumes on the next three tetrads more meaningful and useful.

The Translator

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ĀNĀPĀNASATI

Mindfulness of Breathing

A talk given by Ven. Ācariya Buddhādāsa
on the 23rd of June, 2517/1974 to
the students and teachers

from

Dhammasat University

at

**Suanmokkhabalarama Monastery,
Chaiya, Thailand.**

I will now sit so that you can see what is the correct posture for meditation. (Ācariya Buddhādāsa then sat in the formal, meditation posture). Today I shall talk about how to practise meditation, or concentration (Samādhi). I shall speak particularly on Mindfulness of Breathing, as requested by the students and some of the teachers. But before I give instructions on how to practise meditation, I would like to mention a few preliminary points. These points will help you to understand the meaning and purpose of concentration or meditation.

The first point is that the state of concentration is a natural phenomenon. It can come about by itself naturally or even instinctively. However, natural

meditation is not up to the standard. Even animals, when they are faced with an enemy have strong, concentrated will - power. This will - power manifests itself through mental forces and through the eyes in order to frighten and to overpower the enemy. Or when animals do anything with serious intensity, they have a state of concentration. The same is true with human beings. We also have natural concentration. When we are intent on doing anything properly such as—solving a mathematical problem or shooting a target—we have natural concentration. But as I just said, such natural concentration is not deep enough to be up to the standard. Therefore, to develop full or deep concentration, we must apply the methods that were discovered by the ancients and handed down to us from generation to generation; this is a very important point.

The next important point to keep in mind is that there are two kinds of concentration or meditation : They are respectively called wholesome and unwholesome concentration or Right concentration and Wrong concentration. Concentration is unwholesome or wrong if the intention or motive is not pure. For instance, wrong concentration is the concentration that is developed for giving rise to different supernormal or psychic powers with the intention to dominate or to take advantage of others. This we are not concerned with. Even the wicked ones, the Māra, the devil, have this kind of concentration; and this is why they can fight or can fly. We shall deal only with Right Concentration which is pure, purposeful, not dangerous, and not harmful for oneself or for others.

The next point is that concentration has several, different objectives. One particular objective is to quickly gain happiness. This refers to the serene happiness that comes from a pure mind that is free from defilements. This serene happiness is like momentary Nibbāna. It is like tasting Nibbāna momentarily in advance. This kind of happiness can be achieved through concentration. Here the objective is to use the concentration as an instrument for managing one's affairs and for performing one's duties in a more effective way. If applied to worldly matters, concentration can be used in a worldly way. For instance, if one has good concentration, one's mind is firm; one can think sharply; one can remember things better and one is very effective in making decisions. This is concentration concerning worldly affairs. For spiritual matters, concentration is used to destroy mental defilements and to directly attain Nibbāna. Now, if one wants to make use of concentration in both ways (worldly and spiritual), there is a possibility to do so. The way of Concentration such as Mindfulness of Breathing, can help one in both a worldly way and a spiritual way. In the worldly way, Mindfulness of Breathing helps one to develop good health and to have good physical relaxation. Also, one who has good mindfulness or awareness, does not generally make mistakes; he has quick and sharp thinking and he has a good memory. Also, a monk needs all these virtues in order to realize the Noble Path-Fruition and Nibbāna.

Concentration can be seen as having two levels : the common level and the highest level. Concentration on the common level is purposeful and can be used for any purpose, including attaining the Noble Path-Fruition

and Nibbāna. Concentration on the highest level is less concerned with attaining Nibbāna and more with extraordinary phenomena of psychic powers. Not everybody can practise this level of concentration. But everybody can practise concentration on the common level.

Here is an important principle regarding concentration : if a material (physical) or concrete object is used as the object of the concentration; then the concentration can go very far—so far as to attain firm or full concentration culminating in Absorptions. However, if an abstract or mental object is used as the object of the practice, then one gains concentration only on the common level. Abstract objects include such objects as Loving-kindness, Compassion, Thought on (Recollection of) Virtues of the Buddha, or the like. This concentration on the common level is not firm or full; it does not result in Absorptions.

The method of concentration called Mindfulness of Breathing (ĀNĀPĀNASATI) is an all-embracing method. It starts with contemplation on a material object, the breath. This physical object is used as the object for contemplation; gradually one attains firm concentration and then full concentration resulting in Absorptions. Then the well-developed concentration is applied to further stages of Ānāpānasati. In these higher stages, mental phenomena are used as objects for contemplation : impermanence, non-satisfactoriness, non-self, etc. Contemplating on the mental phenomena is popularly called Insight (VIPASSANĀ). The Buddha, however, regarded all the kinds of contemplation as concentration (SAMĀDHI). The Buddha even referred to the contemplation of Impermanence, non-satisfactoriness, and non-self

as the development of concentration. He did not call this (contemplation) Insight (VIPASSANĀ) as we do. Thus the Buddha said that there are four kinds of Development of Concentration (SAMĀDHI-BHĀVANĀ). The first kind of Samādhi-Bhāvanā is a way to gain happiness here and now. This refers to the concentration which can lead one to attain the four Absorptions. The second kind of Samādhi-Bhāvanā enables one to attain psychic powers such as divine-eye, divine ear, etc. This Samādhi-Bhāvanā is developed in other, different ways : through Perception of Light, etc. However, I am not going to discuss this kind of Samādhi here. The third kind of Samādhi-Bhāvanā is for developing full mindfulness or awareness. For this end, one has to develop mindfulness by contemplating on the arising, existing and ceasing of feelings, perceptions and thoughts. This kind of contemplation makes mindfulness and awareness full-fledged (perfect). Finally there is a fourth kind of Samādhi-Bhāvanā which puts an end to the inflows of defilements (ĀSAVA) by means of clearly comprehending the five Aggregates with regard to their arising, existing and ceasing. Note that the Buddha also uses the same term, Samādhi-Bhāvanā, in this last kind of contemplation. He does not use the term Insight (VIPASSANĀ). In our own popular word usage we say that which leads to tranquility is called Samādhi or Samatha and that which leads to clear comprehension of truth of phenomena is called Vipassanā. Both of these expressions, however, can be collectively called Samādhi-Bhāvanā.

Through Mindfulness of Breathing (ĀNĀPĀNA-SATI) one can have three kinds of Samādhi-Bhāvanā, or Development of Concentration. Ānāpānasati is the

first kind of Samādhi-Bhāvanā in that it induces happiness here and now; this happiness is not adulterated by worldly or sensual pleasures. Ānāpānasati is also the third kind of Samādhi-Bhāvanā, that is, one has full mindfulness and awareness through Ānāpānasati. Ānāpānasati is also the fourth kind of Samādhi-Bhāvanā which leads to the destruction of inflows of defilements. If one continues to practise, one reaches the last or the fourth tetrad of Ānāpānasati, which is called "The Establishment of Mindfulness Consisting of Contemplation on Phenomena" (DHĀMMANUPASSANĀ-SATI-PATTHĀNA). Through this tetrad, one has insight into Impermanence, Dispassion, Cessation and Relinquishment— and this insight is used for the destruction of the inflows (Āsava). Such is this brief account of the four kinds of Samādhi-Bhāvanā in relation to Ānāpānasati.

There are many forms and many methods of meditation. As far as I have examined these methods, and as the Buddha says, the method of Ānāpānasati is the most suitable for all persons and all circumstances. Also, Ānāpānasati does not involve difficulties and complications as do some of the other ways of concentration. For example, for the meditation on foulness, one has to go to a cemetery. On the other hand, Ānāpānasati can be practised everywhere; there is no need to use an object which the meditator has to carry with him wherever he goes. For instance, if he contemplates on a disc (KASINA), the meditator has to obtain the disc and take it with him wherever he goes to sit in meditation. As for Ānāpānasati, breathing is always there and is connected with one's person. This is one example of the convenience of Ānāpānasati. And what is more,

Ānāpānasati is the kind of concentration which is not difficult, not complicated and not frightening, horrifying, startling or disgusting. These are the special advantages of Ānāpānasati.

Now we shall discuss the principles regarding the method of practice. You must first of all know that in practice there must be something to contemplate on; this may be called an object (ĀRAMMANA) or sign (NIMITTA). Generally it is called an object; this object is for the mind to contemplate on. If full concentration of Absorption is to be achieved, the object must be material or physical (as mentioned before). In the beginning, the meditator concentrates directly on the object per se. As he progresses, he forms a mental image of the object. This means that the concentration becomes higher. For instance, if he uses a flame as his object of concentration, the meditator first concentrates on the flame itself; later he concentrates on the mental image of the flame. This image he can see even with his eyes closed, In the beginning, he must open the eyes to see the flame or object of concentration. This object of concentration is technically called Preliminary Sign (PARIKAMMA-NIMITTA). Next, even with closed eyes, he sees the mind-made object of the flame. The mind-made object is called the Acquired Sign (UGGAHA-NIMITTA). Further, the Acquired Sign, being an object of the mind-eye, can be changed and adjusted in any way as the meditator wishes. At this stage, when he has the ability to change the Acquired Sign, it is called the Counterpart Sign (PATIBHĀGA-NIMITTA). This Counterpart Sign is up to the standard and shows that the mind is in a suitable condition to give rise to full concentration.

And now we know the salient features of the method of meditation practice : first we directly contemplate on an object itself; then we form a mental image of that object; and finally we control that mental image in any way we like.

After having developed the ability to control the mental image, the meditator can then gain firmness in his meditation. His firmness is first established on the level of the First Absorption. In other words, on the level of the First Absorption, while **contemplating** the object, the meditator **feels** the object; he has **rapturous** feeling "I have succeeded in it!" He feels **happy**, and his mind is one-pointedly **fixed** on the object. All these Virtues are known as Applied Thought, Sustained Thought, Rapture, Happiness and One-pointedness; they are known as the five factors of First Absorption. If all of these virtues or factors manifest completely, then one is said to have attained the First Absorption.

In the discourses of the Buddha, no detail of these factors is given. It is as if, just by mentioning the names of the factors, people knew all about them, because they had already trained themselves in them. Therefore the discourses mention only a short description of the nature of First Absorption. The same applies to the Second, Third and Fourth Absorptions. For the details concerning the way of practice, we have to study other Pali Scriptures including commentaries and also the traditions of practice handed down to us from generation to generation; and then we can form our way of practice.

The attainment of the First Absorption is to be regarded as up to the standard, or concentration on the common level. You may call it average concentration.

It is not concentration on the highest level; for concentration on the highest level, one has to attain the Fourth Absorption. Even without reaching the First Absorption, if one has reached only its neighbourhood, that neighbourhood concentration (UPACĀRA SAMĀDHI) can as well be called average concentration (which is sufficient) for people in general. So do not be discouraged. If you are not able to attain Absorptions, just attain concentration on the average or common level. Concentration on the common level is attained by consciously adjusting your mind and giving rise to more concentration than that which comes about naturally. In passing, you are again reminded that concentration can come about naturally or instinctively. Some persons can naturally and easily have concentration to a great degree. Such persons are fortunate in having enough merits to attain concentration easily, naturally and without any conscious efforts. For other persons concentration is not so easy to develop. They have difficulty to develop their concentration; they have only a small degree of natural concentration. They are not quite fit to develop the higher levels of concentration. For those who can easily attain the highest level, well, let this highest level be their concern. Let the majority of people give rise to common level concentration. Attaining common level concentration is more beneficial than not being able to practise concentration or than not knowing anything about concentration.

There is a term which must be understood. The term is JHĀNA (Lit. contemplation) : We generally use this term only in the sense of concentration or absorption. Most people do not know and do not use

the term Jhāna in the sense of Intuitive Insight (Vipassanā) or Wisdom. In the Scriptures, "Jhāna" is used in both the above senses : Contemplation resulting in deep concentration or absorption is called Jhāna. Contemplation giving rise to intuitive Insight or Wisdom is also called Jhāna. In Thailand, however, when speaking of the term, Jhāna, the reference is generally made to absorption or concentration. But in the Pali Scriptures, it is clear that contemplating and having Insight into the truth of all phenomena, is also referred to as Jhāna. In some other countries, the term Jhana seems to be used in a more correct way. For instance, take the term Jhāna as used for the name of the Jhāna Sect in India. The sect later went to China and came to be called Shin or Shian. Now - a - days, it is known all over the world as Zen. Zen is Jhāna (in Sanskrit Dhyāna). But when one examines the Zen way of practice one finds that it is a complete practice comprising both Concentration and Wisdom. In this practice, concentration is not separated from wisdom and wisdom is not separated from concentration, as is generally done in Thailand.

Let us now examine the system of practice of Ānāpānasati in all its sixteen steps or stages, which are grouped into four tetrads. In Ānāpānasati there is contemplation in the form of concentration; there is contemplation in which concentration is mixed with insight or wisdom; and then there is the kind of contemplation which contains the highest wisdom. To put it this way, however, is rather unwise (not so wise) because concentration and wisdom, or absorption and insight, cannot actually be separated. Even what we call contemplation giving rise to concentration, is also mingled

with wisdom or insight without one's being conscious or aware of it. For one to have Insight without concentration is an impossibility. On the other hand, to have concentration that is not mingled with insight is also an impossibility. When the meditator contemplates with the intention to have concentration, the concentration manifests in him; but he does not contemplate with the intention to follow the small quantity of insight; however, the insight is there in disguise and it is supporting or conditioning the state of concentration. Therefore, even though developing the first tetrad of Anāpānasati (contemplating the breathing), is primarily for the purpose of the common level of concentration, this state of concentration has in it a little hidden insight. This insight is the knowledge of how to contemplate, how to concentrate, etc. Although this knowledge is not manifest, it is a part of the wisdom or insight. Therefore, it is said that the first tetrad of Anāpānasati is concerned with concentration (and not insight per se). As soon as the meditator arrives at the second and third tetrads, insight manifests itself in appropriate proportion together with concentration. Thus both concentration and insight manifest. Further, while practising the fourth tetrad, insight plays its full part and concentration seemingly keeps hidden in the background; but the concentration operates together with insight. Please take it as a principle that concentration (Samādhi) and insight (Paññā) are not separate categorically, but when anyone of the two dominates, the name is given to the dominant factor. Emancipation of Mind (CETOVIMUTTI) is called as such because of the dominance of concentration. Emancipation through Wisdom (PAÑÑĀ - VIMUTTI) is called as such because

of the dominance of wisdom or insight. However, Emancipation of both kinds involves concentration as well as insight. Sometimes the terms used are Samatha-yānika. and Vipassanā-yānika. The former means, "he who has Tranquillity as his Vehicle"; the latter means "he who has Insight as his Vehicle". To draw a line between the two vehicles (ways) would be a folly. Samatha-yānika has the power of concentration of mind as the leading or dominant factor; it has insight in the background. Vipassanā-yānika has the power of insight as the dominating factor; it has concentration in the background.

Now some may want to enquire about Virtue or SĪLA, the first factor of the Threefold Training of Virtue, Concentration and Insight (or Wisdom). Well, in the case of Virtue, it is easier to understand its inseparability with the other two aspects (of the Threefold Training) than their inseparability (Which has been discussed above). In other words, there is no need to cultivate Virtue separately or exclusively. Because when the meditator restrains his senses while contemplating for gaining concentration, his restraint is his virtue. When he controls himself and he successively establishes himself in contemplation, his self-control is his virtue (Sila). Therefore, while practising Anāpānasati, the meditator trains himself in all the three aspects of the Threefold Training, namely Virtue, Concentration and Insight. The only thing is that one or more of these three factors, at some time and at some stages, is (are) evidently more dominant, while the other factors remain concealed; but they are present anyway. This is an established fact that is recognized by Scriptures

including the commentaries and other, later works. Because in fixing and restraining the mind for concentration, there is Virtue present in the very act of contemplating. The meditator has to control, restrain and guard the mind and has to make conscious efforts to establish the mind on the object of contemplation without letting it go away; This is in itself (the Training of) Virtue (Sīla). The meditator has to contemplate the object concerned in order to make the mind calm and tranquil; This is in itself (the Training of) Concentration. Contemplating the object in order to realize the truth of different phenomena is (the Training of) Insight. Therefore, do not be concerned that you have to gradually train yourself in the three factors of the Threefold Training separately, step by step. Such a training is not possible. And, moreover, one just would not do it that way. Generally, people cannot even keep the precepts or Virtue pure. Resolve to do meditation by applying yourself to Anāpānasati, or Mindfulness of Breathing; and then Virtue, Concentration and Insight will manifest harmoniously together with the practice itself.

This is the basic or general knowledge that I have discussed in advance of the meditation.

In the light of the above facts, let us be concerned with how to meditate—how to apply the method of Anāpānasati—Bhāvanā (Development of Mindfulness of Breathing); this method is suitable for everyone. The principles of Anāpānasati are found in the Discourse on Anāpānasati (Majjhima—Nikāya, Suttanta Pitaka). It is not that I have thought out or established Anāpānasati. Nay, not so. The explanations on how to practise Anāpānasati are found in other, different discourses.

Very detailed explanations are found in the Khuddaka-Nikāya, especially in the book of Paṭisambhidā-Magga. Merits or benefits of Ānāpānasati are discussed everywhere in the discourses and in the Paṭisambhidā Magga. For other miscellaneous matters, we can find help from explanations found in specially written works such as the Visuddhi-Magga (the Path of Purification). Using these references, we have a full account of the explanations, enough for the practice of Ānāpānasati :

Now I shall give you instructions for the practice of Ānāpānasati in terms of the above-mentioned sources together with commentaries and other later works which deal with minor points. Do not forget that the accounts of Ānāpānasati from the lips of the Buddha are very short ones, because it seems that the way of the practice was known among people in those days, and it sufficed that the Buddha mentioned only brief outlines. To practise Ānāpānasati, remember that its literal meaning is : "Having mindfulness to Contemplate any phenomena (dhamma) or fact while each time breathing in and breathing out". In this literal meaning, the expression "to contemplate" does not refer to only one object all the time; it depends on the stage that is contemplated, Any phenomenon that is contemplated is called a fact or truth, dhamma; and it is contemplated with each in-breath and each out-breath; therefore, the method of practice described here is called Ānāpānasati.

As a meditator, you have to take care of some practical matters. For instance, the various disturbing factors must be absent to some extent. Your body should be fairly fit. You have to know appropriate time (for practice). You have to live in a calm and quiet environment; and for the practice. you should choose, as wlel

as you can, the best place to stay. But, however, do not take the Scriptures literally and seriously in the matter of (ideal) place. If you do that, you will have difficulty in choosing a place to practice, and you will then consequently not practise. If you can find a calm and quiet place in a jungle or forest—that is good; stay there. If you stay home, select a comparatively calm and quiet corner and be satisfied with it. If you cannot find such a corner, never mind; just sit somewhere and start your practice. Do not pay attention to anything whatever. Well, it works! You can practise sitting in a train : But you must not deceive yourself; you must not attach to this or that ; you must not pretend and you must have no preference. Just think—if you want—you can practise even sitting in a train full of passangers and running at a great speed. In India, people are seen sitting practising meditation in historical and holy places which are normally quiet; yet even at the times when there is flood of tourists visiting these places, they keep on meditating. They continue sitting indifferently with their eyes closed. It is evident from personal experience that the problem of place can be solved just by being indifferent—by having no choice. Do not complain that such and such calm and quiet place is not available for this or that reason. But if you can find a place to suite your needs, in a jungle, cave or anywhere else, that is good; it eases your practice. A good place, however, does not guarenttee good concentration; you cannot compete with a meditator who can practise anywhere, in each and every place.

Well, as far as prelimanery practice is concerned, you know it yourself (by your common sense). While practising, your body should be in fairly good condition.

This does not mean that you do not have any disease, or that you are perfectly healthy. As you are concerned with breathing, you must suitably adjust your system of breathing. For instance, you must at least clean your nostrils; make them open and fluent. The general method is to take water through your nostrils and then let it out—do this a few times, and your nostrils will be fit for easy breathing for gaining concentration. Hold some water in your palm; draw the water into your nostrils and then force it out. But do not draw the water too deep inside or you might choke. Having cleansed your nostrils, go to a quiet place and sit with your body erect as mentioned in the Discourse on Ānāpānasati. Establish your mindfulness firmly and start contemplating or closely watching the breathing. Remember that there is a difference between just sitting and sitting erect. You must sit in such a way that you would not easily topple over. Therefore, we have an old or ancient way of sitting that is handed down to us. It is called “sitting in meditation or ‘meditation posture’”. It is a posture used to develop meditation. The actual Pali term for this posture is ‘PALLAṆKAM ĀBHUJITVĀ’ which literally means, “bending (the legs) in crosswise, bending in the round lap,” that is, sitting cross-legged. This is then the way to sit cross-legged : stretch your legs and bend them; then form Pallanka by crossing your legs at the shins. The term Pallanka also literally means a stool or sofa, but the use of a stool is not intended here. Here Pallanka implies that our shins and hip become a good supporting base for sitting. “Sitting cross-legged” is the most appropriate translation for Pallanka, for with the legs crossed, the sitting becomes firm and compact. Therefore, from ancient times, people in India have sat

with their legs crossed in such a way that it is not easy to topple over. This way of sitting has become their habit. The Chinese and westerners later learned it and called it the Indian way of sitting. In India, sitting cross-legged is something ordinary and simple.

If you sit without placing one leg over the other, then your sitting posture is loose because your body can easily topple over. If you place one leg on the other, your position (posture) becomes stronger, and it improves by 50%. But if you once again place one leg on the other cross-wise, then the position becomes all the more stronger and firm. For this (position), we use the term cross-legged. The cross-legged position is a technique which makes the sitting so firm that the meditator, be he in conscious or subconscious state, cannot topple over. Moreover, in this position there is not so much pain, because the bones do not touch the ground. If a person is a little fat, the tissues (of his hip) will support the body instead of the bones. Neither the bones nor the ankles will touch the ground. Knees will not touch the ground either.

In the cross-legged position, you can sit a long time. To sit erect, just fully stretch your backbone until it is straight. If it has become your habit to sit bending, then you can re-train yourself in this manner : Sit cross-legged with your knees touching the ground. Then press down on the knees with your hands and stretch your back as much as you can. This is the way to straighten your back or body. When your back is straight, it will make your breathing, blood-circulation, and the like, be smoother than usual; and you will be ready (fit) to practise meditation. Train yourself to sit as explained. Do not sit leaning forward. Bending

forward is wrong in many ways : the breath is not smooth ; the blood does not circulate evenly ; and the backbone is not in a healthy position.

People often ask whether the eyes are to be kept open or closed (during meditation). Well, the answer is that if you are really an enthusiastic meditator, you keep your eyes open. Yogis in India have been asked this question of what to do with the eyes. They advise that the eyes remain open.

Sit straight ; stretch your body up ; now look at the nose-tip as if you were watching it. Try to see the nose-tip even though you cannot see it. Even if you try to see something other than the nose-tip, you do not see it. And this means, open the eyes as they are, nothing is seen (except perhaps, vaguely, the nose-tip) because the nose-tip is intended to be seen. The advantage of open eyes is that you hardly feel sleepy and also your eyes will not feel a burning sensation. But if a person is weakling, not an enthusiastic meditator, he cannot meditate with his eyes open. He can shut his eyes as he wishes. But then he will easily feel sleepy because of the burning feeling in the eyes. To start with open eyes shows more firmness and greater enthusiasm. Afterwards, as concentration gradually gets firm, the eyes slowly begin to close by themselves and finally, they are closed completely and automatically. So much for the posture of the body, the nose and the eyes.

Go to a solitary place ; sit cross-legged ; establish mindfulness firmly ; then contemplate the object of breathing : You observe each in-breath and each out-breath. If this object of breath is to be made clear, breathe smoothly and strongly enough so you can contemplate it easily. Go on breathing in and breathing out. First, take note that the breathing is correct and smooth ;

and then go on to observe the other phenomena. Observe the breathing in various ways for a considerable time. Then apply some method to contemplate the breathing more easily and distinctly. For this purpose, here is the easiest formula or procedure : First, follow the breathing. Second, watch it closely. Third, create a mental image on the nose - tip. Fourth, exercise control over the mental image. Fifth, investigate how to develop all the five Factors of Absorption (Jhāna).

The first two steps—Following and Watching—are concerned with contemplating the natural object, the breathing. The third step is to give rise to a mental image. This image becomes the new sign (Nimitta) which is clear to the mental eye—you can feel or perceive it even with your eyes closed. The fourth step is to have control over the mental image or object that has been visualized—this mental image is called Counterpart Sign (Paṭibhāga - Nimitta).

Now you are ready to give rise to concentration (Samādhi). Start by Following (the breathing) : As you take an in - breath follow it; as you take an out - breath, follow it. What is it that follows? You may think that what follows the breathing is 'me'; or you may think that it is 'the mind' or that it is 'mindfulness'. To use the term 'me' is only a conventional way of speaking. To use the term 'mind' is vague. The appropriate term is 'mindfulness' (Sati). Mindfulness is a feeling (sensitivity) of mind, which follows after the breathing. To facilitate contemplation, take rough and long breaths : First take rough and long in - breaths, then take rough and long out - breaths. As a help, you can slowly stretch and then bend your arm as you breathe in and breathe out.

In the very beginning of Ānāpānasati you are like a school boy who practises the A B C on the very first day in school. You also must practise the A B C of breathing. Try this : having breathed out, while breathing in, lean slightly backwards so as to ease the contemplation and to make the breathing clearer. If the person is too stupid or too foolish, he may make a sound while breathing—please excuse me for using harsh language. He can breathe loudly as—whiz...z...z—because for a slothful person, contemplation is naturally heavy. If the breath gets too subtle, he can breathe heavily and make a hissing sound. At times, he can move his body in such a way as to help him as he breathes in and breathes out. At this point, if he is still so stupid as not to be able to contemplate, he can breathe in and out following the rhythm of the movement of his hand—then the fellow can contemplate!

Now there are other ways that can help a person who has difficulty in meditation : If he is attached to the words, Buddha, Dhamma or Sangha, he can repeat “Buddho, Buddho, etc., as he breathes in and out. But such a method is useful only in the beginning; afterwards there is no need for it. Another method is to use counting : Here the length of the breaths is regulated by counting—this is called Following the breathing. From the point of breathing out until the point where the breathing is exhausted, to count from one to five is just fine. If the number of counting is increased, it is to be the same for the in—breath and the out—breath. Both in—and out—breaths are to be equal. If the counting is increased to ten, the breaths tend to become longer; if the counting is reduced, the breaths immediately become shorter

and quicker. Length of the breath can be observed while following the breaths. Mindfulness directed to breaths knows if breaths are long, knows if breaths are short.

When you begin to follow the breathing, you come to know the difference between long and short breaths. As you follow the breathing, if any thought arises and disturbs the practice, you must not hold on to that thought at all, but go on following the breathing earnestly. See the breath as something physical which runs in and out (followed by mindfulness). Let us assume that the starting point for the running breath is at the nose-tip. Let us assume that the in-breath ends in the belly. At the navel, there is movement and feeling created by the breath there. Then the breath turns out. Let us assume that the out-breath has its starting point inside the abdomen and has its terminal point at the nose-tip. The in-and out-breaths alternately go in and out between these two points. While observing the breaths at these two points, there is a gap* which gives the continuity of mindfulness a chance to break. That is, at this gap, the mind has an opportunity to escape or to go elsewhere—even though you are still observing the two points. Therefore, you must distinctly contemplate these two points. As the breath goes in, assume that it must end at the navel and that it must then go out. The same applies to the out-breath. The assumption

* *There is a gap between observing the terminal point of the in-breath and the starting point of the out-breath; because here **the same point**, namely, the navel, is involved. The same applies to the starting point of in-breath and terminal point of the out-breath, namely, the nose-tip.*

is useful to make contemplation easier—you are not giving the mind (mindfulness) a chance to get discontinued, to escape somewhere else, or to think something else. A physical object, breath, is used to control the non-physical mind.

Breathe strongly so that you produce sound. It has been observed that some yogis in India breathe by making a sound like a whistle. So breathe by producing a sound like a whistle, then the contemplation will be easier. In this way, the practice of Following the breathing is accomplished.

This is a brief explanation of how to practise Following the breathing. Now you should be able to practise by following the breathing in and out without letting the mind have a chance to steal away. Also, notice the differences that are in each round of breathing. You will discover these differences. You will see that the breathing is sometimes short, sometimes long; and you will observe that the state of mind can also change with the different breaths. Natural breathing, if it is not otherwise disturbed, keeps itself steady and even and it changes according to the mood or emotions. If the mood changes to anger, the breathing gets short; if the mood is good, the breathing becomes longer. If you become angry, the breathing gets rough; if you are quiet, the breathing is normal and cool and it becomes subtle. Roughness arises with short breaths; and subtleness arises with long breaths. By this kind of observation, you can make rough breathing become subtle simply by controlling the length of the breathing; If you control the breathing by making it long, it will

become subtle by itself. If you take short breaths, the breathing will become rough by itself. In other words, you can make the breathing rough or subtle simply by making it long or short.

Now you can extend your control to the body and the mind. That is to say, if you can control breathing, this means that you can control your body because the breath and the body are interconnected. If the breathing is rough, the body is coarse or rough; if the breathing is subtle, the body is delicate or calm. If you can control the breathing by making it delicate, it will automatically become calm. When the breath is calm, the body as well tends to become successively calm. You will discover this secret through your experience. If you know through your experience what is rough breath and what is subtle breath, then you can increase your control over the breathing as you wish. Control of breathing is the control of body, and also that of mind.

The first lesson is to follow the breathing. Do not yet think about other matters; do not think of the next step. Thinking will only result in confusion. You are learning one step, the first step—call it kindergarten—it is enough for now. (why bother about higher steps?) Now you are concerned only with Following the breathing. When the proper time comes, you go on following the breathing; you go on and on and on until you have it, that is, until you are proficient in it. How long will it take? How many weeks will it take? Don't think about that. Just be concerned to train yourself to follow the breathing to the utmost, to your level best; be well-versed in following the breathing. Just this alone will

yield many good results. Practise the ABC of mindfulness of breathing; this is enough to acquaint you with calm and peace. You will have proper breathing; you will have good health; you will begin to be more mindful. Just train yourself in the first step of Following the breathing and your wisdom will begin to develop to some extent. You know how to observe; you know how to control, how to adjust. Briefly, this is the first step: Following the breathing.

Now we come to the second lesson. Well, at this step, you watch very closely a certain point, that is, you no longer follow the breathing. The most appropriate point is the nose-tip (or inside the nostril) which is the point where the breath touches (the body) all the time, both while going in and while coming out. Take the nose-tip as the point to watch closely. Now, you must train yourself to observe the contact of the breath at the nose-tip. **Feel** the breath and nose-contact so that it is very distinct. Develop a sensitivity for the point of contact. Imagine that at this contact point, there is a sensitive wound; the wound hurts and thrills you as the breath strikes it. Such imagination really works. If you do not feel the contact, breathe strongly until you can observe the touch which is there. Then watch the touch or contact without following the breath in and out. The **Watching** is many times more difficult than the **Following**; because, while you are watching, the mind (or mindfulness) has a chance to escape before it is fixed at the nose-tip. However, there is a way to cope with this problem; here is how you can stop the mind from escaping: as a first measure, breathe heavily and continuously making a hissing or sizzling sound. At the same time, watch the breath as it touches the nose-tip and continue

to watch it until it is exhausted. Each in-and out-breath always touches the nose-tip. But be particularly watchful at the crucial moment when, after the in-breath has gone in, the out-breath begins to flow out; and vice versa—here there is a gap that gives the mind a chance to be at large. The mind escapes because you are apt to speculate, “In the beginning, I was busy following the breathing. Why could the mind not escape?... because I followed the breathing uninterrupted”. Of course, while you were following, the mindfulness was unbroken—like drawing an unbroken, straight line. But now you are to become more skillful at watching one single point. This is the second lesson. Go on watching, go on and on, until the touch at the nose-tip becomes successively clearer. As you progress, the exercise becomes a little more subtle and more difficult. When you have succeeded, you come to the next step which is still more subtle.

The third step is to make a mental image at the contact-point of the nose-tip. Well, it is well-known that this mental image is a vision created by the mind; it is not something real. It is a creation of the inward eye. For instance, if you see a fire with your eyes closed, that fire is a mental image. Now in this third step, you are to create a mental image at the nose-tip. Bend your mind to see if there is any image at the nose-tip. Some kind of image will eventually appear according to your idiosyncrasy. A short-cut way to do this is to visualize an object (at the nose-tip) of which you have photographic memory or vision. For example, you might use a fire or a lamp on which you have previously concentrated. Or else you might take any

ordinary object that you are familiar with—such as a light—and imagine this object is present at your nose—tip. Then you go on visualizing more and more until the mind is very concentrated. Eventually you will somehow be able to fix some kind of image there.

Details about the varieties of images are found in the post—canonical literature. This literature mentions, for instance, that a mental image might look like a small tuft of cotton or wool, or a little patch of fog or smoke, that appears at the nose—tip. These objects—a tuft of cotton etc.—do not factually manifest themselves at the nose—tip. They are visual objects and so they are called mental images. When you are in the world of images, you have no sense of anything—including directions.

You may keep your eyes closed; it will be easier (to contemplate that way.) Even with closed eyes, you will see some image; the image may be like a small tuft of cotton, or a little film of smoke or cloud, etc. Your practice will go smoother if the image is a bright object such as a clear dew—drop on a leaf at morn, or a small spider—web glittering in the open sun, or a small moon or sun. So many kinds of images are mentioned in the scriptures. Anyway, whatever mental image you visualize, you must first contemplate on it and make it firmly fixed at the nose—tip. Note that the practice here is difficult and thus you have to take various measures to control and adjust the image; and only then can the image be kept fixed. The result is that your concentration and your ability to control and to restrain your mind becomes more developed in proportion to the hard effort you make in the practice. Thus you succeed in the third lesson : You make a mental image at the nose—tip.

Now you are advanced enough to take up the fourth lesson which is still more difficult. Here the task is to bend your mind to cause changes in the mental image. Suppose you choose the small image of the moon. Now bend your mind so as to change its colour, its size and its position. That is, let it go afloat; let it come back; let it move back and forth. In whatever way you bend your mind, the image will appear in that way. But you must always remember that the appearance of the image is only the result of training and controlling the mind, that no form of the image is real. If you intend to develop psychic powers, you will have to contemplate very rigorously; you must contemplate very rigorously; you must contemplate so much so that persons near you will also, as a side-effect, see the image as well. But that is not aimed at here. It is enough if you only intend to be able to control your mind to feel or see (visualize) the image in any way you like. And if you can do this, you become abler; you become more expert in restraining the mind, in controlling the mind so that you can see in whatever way you like to see; and you can change the mental image in whatever way you please. This means that you are now very skillful; you have mastery over this aspect of practice of changing and holding the mental image as you like. Before this step or stage is completed, everything has been very well drilled, nurtured, seasoned and hatched. You have completed the fourth step.

Now you can go on to the fifth step which deals with Absorption. If you wish to develop the factors of Absorption, select the mental image which is most suitable (agreeable, pleasing, clear) and which is still, that is, does not change (by itself). Quietly watch the

image and feel the mind concentrated on it. Watching the image is called Applied Thought (VITAKKA). Feeling the image thoroughly is called Sustained Thought (VICĀRA). With the Applied Thought and Sustained Thought, you are at ease; you have a feeling of satisfaction—so much so that you experience this feeling in your whole body—this feeling is called Rapture (PĪTI). Apart from this, you feel happy or blissful (SUKHA). Rapture and Happiness (Bliss) are not the same feelings. Rapture is feeling joy or satisfaction that you have succeeded (in your practice). Happiness is blissful feeling. Inwardly observe the feelings of Rapture and Happiness (Bliss) and you will experience what is called One-pointedness (EKAGGATĀ). One-pointedness alone is above both the Rapture and Bliss. Now you are in the state of the Absorption; that means the mind has now only one object (to be concentrated on). Now, One-pointedness forms an apex with the first four factors at its base. Thus you have the five Factors of Absorption, namely, Applied Thought, Sustained Thought, Rapture, Happiness (Bliss), and One-pointedness (in which the mind is absorbed). When such completeness or perfection is attained by fully developing all the five Factors of the First Absorption, you attain the First Absorption.

These are the signs of the First Absorption : there are no mental hindrances (Nīvaraṇa) disturbing the mind; the sinful or unwholesome states of the mind cease to exist; there is a feeling of joy and happiness (bliss). With only this much experience, you have succeeded in the kind of meditation which has bestowed happiness (bliss); you are satisfied here and now, in this very life; you do not have to wait until you die to

experience Nibbāna. Now you have experienced Nibbāna momentarily; you have foretasted Nibbana in that the mind in this very First Absorption is endowed with a happiness and a bliss (that is comparable to Nibbāna).

The foregoing five lessons are : 1. Following, 2. Watching, 3. Giving rise to the Mental Image, 4. Controlling the Mental Image, and 5. Giving rise to the five Absorption Factors. These steps form the practice of the first tetrad of Anāpānasati. When put in the language of the Discourse on Anāpānasati, the first tetrad is like this : 1. The first step is to know long breaths. 2. The second step is to know short breaths. 3. The third step is to know bodily formations (Kāya-Sankhāra), to know that the very breaths, both long and short, condition the body. In other words, to know that the state of body (both physical and mental body) depends on the long and short breaths. In the third step, you have clear comprehension that bodily formations (breaths) are responsible for different states of the body (mental and physical). 4. The fourth step is to calm down the bodily formations. This means that the breathing must successively become more and more subtle to the extent that there emerges the First Absorption which is a certain definite state (level) of concentration. While developing the Absorption, the meditator is always aware as he breathes in and breathes out. He contemplates both the the in-going long breaths and the out-going long breaths. He contemplates both the in-going, short breaths and the out-going, short breaths. He also knows the facts concerning the bodily formations, that is, he knows that the breaths are concerned with the different formations of the body (mind and physical), that is, the breaths are all

the time conditioning the body. And he knows this both as he breathes in and breathes out. He experiences that the body is rather disturbed when the breathing is rough or short, and that the body is calm when the breathing is long or subtle. He does not obtain this knowledge from words in books. He does not arrive at this knowledge by speculations or logical calculations. From his own experience, he knows that when the breathing is long, it is subtle and the body also becomes subtle : The body heat (temperature) decreases, it becomes cooler and free from restlessness. From the very first step of Following, the meditator begins to know that the breathing conditions the body, that the state of the body depends on the breathing. And as he comes to the level of practice where he can create and control a mental image, he is then able to control the bodily formations. Finally he practises the fourth step, that is, he calms down the bodily formations and attains the first Absorption.

Thus the four steps of the first tetrad deal with : long breathing, short breathing, bodily formations, and calming the bodily formations. These four steps are accomplished by training oneself in the five lessons : Following, Watching, Creating a Mental Image, Controlling the Mental Image as one wishes, and distinctly experiencing the five Factors of Absorption. That is all.

Now you can see how the four steps of the first tetrad of Anāpānasati are realized by using the simple technique or secret embodied in the five lessons. Such an explanation is not to be found either in the canonical literature, or in the commentaries; in this literature, the

explanations on this subject are too lengthy and much more abstruse than I have given. I have abridged the matter, made it easy to 'digest' for those who want to study (Anāpānasati) in an easy form and who want to practise it easily.

So it will do you good to practise the five lessons : Following, Watching, Making a Mental Image, Controlling the Image, and completely experiencing all the five Factors of Absorption. Remember that these five lessons must be put into practice, and then you can achieve success in the first tetrad : You will know long breathing and short breathing. You will know all bodily formations; and you will calm these bodily formations—this is the whole practice of the first tetrad. This is enough for those who intend to practise the second, third and fourth tetrads of Anāpānasati which deal respectively with feelings, mind and mind-objects. A lot more could be said about the tetrads. But at present there is no need for you to be concerned about the other tetrads or you might become confused. Therefore, I urge you : First, please take a practical interest in concentration (Samādhi) per se, practise it. If you can do this much, there will be many changes in your body and mind : You will enjoy good health, a sound body, a smooth respiratory system, better mindfulness plus awareness (Sati—Sampajañña). You will have the ability to exercise good control over your body which is prone to change in various manners by way of getting tense or relaxed, hot or agitated, etc. Your mind will be so disciplined that you can control excitement and emotional irritations—and all this is the result of the practice explained so far. There are also more good results to be

gained from the next steps. However, you need not think of them at this time. First you had better practise the first tetrad.

And now here is a summary of today's talk : Do your best to find a suitable, quiet place (or corner); sit straight; establish mindfulness on the in-and-out-breathing; establish the mindfulness in the way advised in the five lessons of Following, Watching, Making a Mental Image, Controlling the Image, and giving rise to all the five Factors of Absorption (JHĀNĀṄGA).

So far so good, considering the time at our disposal, and considering your capacity to experience the practice of the first tetrad. How much time will the practice take? How many days? weeks? months? Do not worry about time. Just start! That's it.



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If applied to worldly matters, Concentration can be used in a worldly way. For instance, if one has good concentration, one's mind is firm; one can think sharply; one can remember things better and one is very effective in making decisions... For spiritual matters, concentration is used to destroy mental defilements and to attain Nibbāna... In the worldly way, Mindfulness of Breathing helps one to develop good health and to have good physical relaxation. Also, one who has good mindfulness or awareness, does not generally make mistakes; he has quick and sharp thinking and a good memory. page 3.

Ānāpānasati is the kind of Concentration which is not difficult, not complicated and not frightening, horrifying, startling or disgusting. page 7.

Natural breathing, if it is not otherwise disturbed, keeps itself steady and even and it changes according to the mood or emotions. If the mood changes to anger, the breathing gets short; if the mood is good, the breathing becomes longer. If you become angry, the breathing gets rough; if you are quiet, the breathing is normal and cool and it becomes subtle... If you control the breathing by making it long, it will become subtle by itself.

...if you can control breathing, this means that you can control your body because the breath and the body are interconnected. If the breathing is rough, the body is coarse or rough; if the breathing is subtle, the body is delicate or calm... When the breath is calm, the body as well tends to become successively calm. You will discover this secret through your experience ...Control of breathing is the control of body, and also that of mind. PP. 22-23