

The Discourse on Mindfulness with Breathing In and Out (Ānāpānasati Sutta)¹

Introduction

I have heard thus:

At one time the Exalted One was staying near Sāvathī,² in the mansion of Migāra's mother in the Eastern Grove, together with many widely known elder disciples: Venerable Sāriputta, Venerable Mahā-Moggallāna, Venerable Mahā-Kassapa, Venerable Mahā-Kaccāyana, Venerable Mahā-Koṭṭhita, Venerable Mahā-Kappina, Venerable Mahā-Cunda, Venerable Revata, Venerable Ānanda, and other widely-known elder disciples.

At that time those venerable elders taught and trained the new bhikkhus. Some of the elders taught and trained ten bhikkhus, some of them taught and trained thirty bhikkhus, and some of them taught and trained forty bhikkhus. Those new bhikkhus, when taught and trained by the elders so, understood that which is lofty and excellent more than ever before.

During that time the Exalted One³ was sitting in the open surrounded by the community of bhikkhus on the observance day of the fifteenth, the full moon night of the last month of the Rains Residence.⁴ The Exalted One surveyed the calm and silent assembly of bhikkhus, then spoke.

"Bhikkhus, we are certain of this way of practice. Bhikkhus, we are convinced by this way of practice. Bhikkhus, for this reason you should summon up even more energy for attaining the unattained, for reaching the unreached, for realizing the unrealized. I will wait here at Sāvathī until the fourth and final month of the rains, the blossoming time of the white lotus (*komudī*)."

The bhikkhus in the countryside came to know that the Exalted One would remain at Sāvathī until the fourth and final month of the rains, the blossoming time of the white lotus. They streamed continuously into Sāvathī in order to attend (upon?) the Exalted One. Further, the venerable elders taught and trained the newly arrived bhikkhus in great measure. Some of the elders taught and trained ten bhikkhus, some of them taught and trained twenty bhikkhus, some of them taught and trained thirty bhikkhus, and some of them taught and trained forty bhikkhus. Those new bhikkhus, when taught and trained by the elders so, understood that which is lofty and excellent more than ever before.

Now, at that later time, the Exalted One was sitting in the open surrounded by the community of bhikkhus, on the night of the full moon observance day of the fourth and final month of the rains, the blossoming time of the white lotus. The Exalted One surveyed the calm and silent assembly of bhikkhus,

1. The translator is not a Pali scholar. This rendering is based on Ajahn Buddhādāsa's translation from Pali to Thai and his line-by-line explanation of that translation. Previous English translations by I.B. Horner, Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, and Bhikkhu Nāgasena have been consulted as well.

2. Then the capital of the kingdom of Kosala, located between the Himalayas and the Ganges River, Sāvathī was the geographical center of the Buddha's teaching during his lifetime. He spent twenty-five of forty-five rains residences there.

3. *Bhagavā*, a frequent epithet of the Buddha. It was a common form of address in India, but Buddhists reserve it for the Buddha. Often translated "Blessed One."

4. The third month of the four month long rainy season.

then spoke.

The Community of Bhikkhus

"Bhikkhus, this community is not at all worthless. This community is not a failure in the least (way?). This community is established in the pure essence of Dhamma. Bhikkhus, this community is worthy of gifts, is worthy of hospitality, is worthy of offerings, is worthy of homage, and is a field more fertile than any other in the world for the cultivation of merit.

"Bhikkhus, this community of bhikkhus is an assembly such that people who make small offerings to it receive much and people who make large offerings receive even more. This community of bhikkhus is an assembly most difficult to find in this world. This community of bhikkhus is an assembly worthy of people packing up provisions and walking great distances to come and observe it.

"Bhikkhus, living in this community there are bhikkhus who are Worthy Ones (*arahants*) without eruptions (*āsavas*)⁵, who have lived the sublime life, have done what is to be done, have dropped all burdens, have attained their purpose, have ended the fetters to existence,⁶ and are liberated through right understanding. Bhikkhus such as these are living in this community of bhikkhus.

"Bhikkhus, living in this community there are bhikkhus who are Non-Returners through having ended the five lower fetters, who are spontaneously arisen,⁷ who will realize perfect coolness in that existence and by nature will never return from that world. Bhikkhus such as these are living in this community of bhikkhus.

"Bhikkhus, living in this community there are bhikkhus who are Once-Returners through having ended the three fetters⁸ and lessened lust and hatred, who will come back to this world only once and then will put an end to *dukkha*. Bhikkhus such as these are living in this community of bhikkhus.

"Bhikkhus, living in this community there are bhikkhus who are Stream-Enterers through having ended the three fetters, who by nature never will fall into evil again and are certain of future awakening. Bhikkhus such as these are in this community of bhikkhus.

"Bhikkhus, living in this community there are bhikkhus who dwell devoted in practicing the cultivation of the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). Bhikkhus such as these are living in this community of bhikkhus.

"Bhikkhus, living in this community there are bhikkhus who dwell devoted in practicing the

5. Conditions which ferment in, and flow out or erupt from, the mind's depths. Usually given as three: *kāmāsava*, eruption of sensuality; *bhavāsava*, eruption of becoming; and *avijjāsava*, eruption of ignorance. Sometimes a fourth is added: *diṭṭhāsava*, eruption of views. The ending of the *āsavas* is synonymous with perfect awakening. (Other translations are "cankers, taints, influxes.")

6. The ten *saṃyojana* which bind beings to the cycles of becoming are personality belief, uncertainty about the path, superstitious use of rituals and practices, sensuous lust, ill-will, lust for fine-material existence, lust for immaterial existence, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance.

7. *Oppātika*, born instantly and fully mature without going through the process of conception, gestation, infancy, and childhood — that is, instantaneous mental birth (not necessarily "re-birth" in the conventional sense).

8. The first three of the ten *saṃyojana*.

cultivation of the four right efforts⁹ ...

... bhikkhus who dwell devoted in practicing the cultivation of the four bases of success¹⁰ ...

... bhikkhus who dwell devoted in practicing the cultivation of the five faculties¹¹ ...

... bhikkhus who dwell devoted in practicing the cultivation of the five powers¹² ...

... bhikkhus who dwell devoted in practicing the cultivation of the seven factors of awakening¹³ ...

... bhikkhus who dwell devoted in practicing the cultivation of the noble eightfold path¹⁴ ...

... bhikkhus who dwell devoted in practicing the cultivation of friendliness (*mettā*) ...

... bhikkhus who dwell devoted in practicing the cultivation of compassion (*karunā*) ...

... bhikkhus who dwell devoted in practicing the cultivation of sympathetic joy (*muditā*) ...

... bhikkhus who dwell devoted in practicing the cultivation of equanimity (*upekkhā*) ...

... bhikkhus who dwell devoted in practicing the cultivation of the non-beautiful¹⁵ ...

... bhikkhus who dwell devoted in practicing the cultivation of the experience of impermanence (*aniccasaññā*). Bhikkhus such as these are living in this community of bhikkhus.

"Bhikkhus, living in this community there are bhikkhus who dwell devoted in practicing the cultivation of mindfulness with breathing (*ānāpānasati*).

Mindfulness with Breathing

"Bhikkhus, *ānāpānasati* that one has developed and made much of has great fruit and great benefit.

Ānāpānasati that one has developed and made much of perfects the four foundations of mindfulness. The

9. The four *sammappadhāna* are the effort to prevent or avoid unwholesome states which have not arisen; the effort to overcome or abandon unwholesome states which have arisen; the effort to develop wholesome states which have not arisen; and the effort to maintain wholesome states which have arisen.

10. The four *iddhipāda* are *chanda*, love of duty; *virīya*, effort in duty; *citta*, thoughtfulness regarding duty; and *vimaṅṣā*, investigation of duty through practicing Dhamma.

11. The five *indriya* are *saddhā*, confidence, faith; *virīya*, effort, energy; *sati*, mindfulness; *samādhi*, concentration; and *paññā*, wisdom.

12. The five *bala* have the same names as the five *indriya*, but function differently. The five *bala* function as powers which provide the strength needed to overcome and withstand their opposites (i.e., lack of confidence, laziness, carelessness, distraction, and delusion.) The five *indriya* are the chief sovereign or controlling faculties which lead each group of *dhammas* as they deal with their opposites (e.g., lack of confidence).

13. The seven *bojjhanga* are *sati*, mindfulness; *dhammavicaya*, investigation of dhamma; *virīya*, effort; *pīti*, contentment; *passaddhi*, tranquility; *samādhi*, concentration; and *upekkhā*, equanimity. They are discussed in detail later in the *Sutta*.

14. The *ariya-aṅgaṅgika-magga* consists of right understanding, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

15. *Asubha-bhāvanā* is used to counteract and overcome lust.

four foundations of mindfulness that one has developed and made much of perfect the seven factors of awakening. The seven factors of awakening that one has developed and made much of perfect insight knowledge and liberation.

Bhikkhus, how does *ānāpānasati* that one has developed and made much of have great fruit and great benefit? Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu within this Training (*dhamma-vinaya*), having gone into the forest, to the base of a tree or to an empty dwelling, having sat cross-legged with his body erect, securely maintains mindfulness (*sati*). Ever mindful that bhikkhu breathes in, ever mindful he breathes out.

First Tetrad

(1) While breathing in long he fully comprehends: I breathe in long. While breathing out long he fully comprehends: I breathe out long.¹⁶

(2) While breathing in short he fully comprehends: I breathe in short. While breathing out short he fully comprehends: I breathe out short.

(3) He trains himself: thoroughly experiencing all bodies I shall breathe in. He trains himself: thoroughly experiencing all bodies I shall breathe out.¹⁷

(4) He trains himself: calming the body-conditioner I shall breathe in. He trains himself: calming the body-conditioner I shall breathe out.¹⁸

Second Tetrad

(5) He trains himself: thoroughly experiencing *pīti* I shall breathe in. He trains himself: thoroughly experiencing *pīti* I shall breathe out.

(6) He trains himself: thoroughly experiencing *sukha* I shall breathe in. He trains himself: thoroughly experiencing *sukha* I shall breathe out.

(7) He trains himself: thoroughly experiencing the mind-conditioner I shall breathe in. He trains himself: thoroughly experiencing the mind-conditioner I shall breathe out.¹⁹

(8) He trains himself: calming the mind-conditioner I shall breathe in. He trains himself: calming the mind-conditioner I shall breathe out.²⁰

16. The words "fully comprehends" mean that there is *sati-sampajañña* (mindfulness and ready comprehension) with every moment of noting the in-breaths and out-breaths in all their aspects.

17. "Bodies" (*kāya*) refers to the breath in its aspect of conditioning the flesh body. "Experiencing all bodies" (*sabbakāyaṃ paṭisaṅveti*) refers to directly knowing the breath's characteristics — such as short or long, coarse or fine, calm or agitated — knowing how they condition the flesh-body, knowing their natural processes of change, and knowing other relevant details about the breathing.

18. As the breath is calmed and refined, the conditioning of the body is calmed, and the mind becomes calm and concentrated to the extent, finally, of *jhāna*.

19. Know how feelings (*vedanā*), especially the pleasant ones, condition the mind with every breath.

20. Be able to decrease the ability of the feelings to condition the mind. Decrease their conditioning of the mind until there is nothing conditioning it, i.e., there is no feeling, no perception (*saññā*), and no thought (*vitakka*) at that time.

Third Tetrad

(9) He trains himself: thoroughly experiencing the mind I shall breathe in. He trains himself: thoroughly experiencing the mind I shall breathe out.²¹

(10) He trains himself: gladdening the mind I shall breathe in. He trains himself: gladdening the mind I shall breathe out.²²

(11) He trains himself: concentrating the mind I shall breathe in. He trains himself: concentrating the mind I shall breathe out.²³

(12) He trains himself: liberating the mind I shall breathe in. He trains himself: liberating the mind I shall breathe out.²⁴

Fourth Tetrad

(13) He trains himself: constantly contemplating impermanence I shall breathe in. He trains himself: constantly contemplating impermanence I shall breathe out.²⁵

(14) He trains himself: constantly contemplating fading away I shall breathe in. He trains himself: constantly contemplating fading away I shall breathe out.²⁶

(15) He trains himself: constantly contemplating quenching I shall breathe in. He trains himself: constantly contemplating quenching I shall breathe out.²⁷

(16) He trains himself: constantly contemplating tossing back I shall breathe in. He trains himself: constantly contemplating tossing back I shall breathe out.²⁸

Bhikkhus, this is how *ānāpānasati* that one has developed and made much of has great fruit and great benefit.

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21. Know the exact state of mind at that moment, whether it is spotless or darkened, calm or agitated, prepared to work (contemplate Dhamma) or not ready, or whatever state may arise.
 22. Be able to amuse the mind with Dhamma in various ways.
 23. Expertly observe the qualities and extent of the mind's *samādhi*.
 24. Observe the qualities and extent of the mind's freedom from attachment.
 25. With every breath, use the correctly concentrated mind to contemplate impermanence continuously, until realizing the unsatisfactoriness, selflessness, voidness, and thusness of all conditioned things.
 26. With every breath, examine the state of the mind being disenchanted with, weary of, and dispassionate toward the things it has desired and attached to.
 27. Examine the ceasing of attachment and realize it as being *nibbāna*, the ceasing and quenching of *dukkha*, then cherish it as the mind's regular object.
 28. Realize that all conditioned things have been freed from attachment. This condition arises in the moments of path (*magga*) and path fruition (*phala*).

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna)

Bhikkhus, how does *ānāpānasati* that one has developed and made much of perfect the four foundations of mindfulness?

Bhikkhus, whenever a bhikkhu (1) while breathing in long fully comprehends: I breathe in long; while breathing out long fully comprehends: I breathe out long; or, (2) while breathing in short fully comprehends: I breathe in short; while breathing out short fully comprehends: I breathe out short; or, (3) trains himself: thoroughly experiencing all bodies I shall breathe in ... shall breathe out; or (4) trains himself: calming the body-conditioner I shall breathe in ... shall breathe out; then that bhikkhu is considered one who lives constantly contemplating body in bodies, strives to burn up defilements, comprehends readily, and is mindful, in order to abandon all liking and disliking toward the world.²⁹

Bhikkhus, I say that the in-breaths and the out-breaths are certain bodies among all bodies. Bhikkhus, for this reason that bhikkhu is considered one who lives constantly contemplating body in bodies, strives to burn up defilements, comprehends readily, and is mindful, in order to abandon all liking and disliking toward the world.

Bhikkhus, whenever a bhikkhu (5) trains himself: thoroughly experiencing *pīti* I shall breathe in ... shall breathe out; or, (6) trains himself: thoroughly experiencing *sukha* I shall breathe in ... shall breathe out; or, (7) trains himself: thoroughly experiencing the mind-conditioner I shall breathe in ... shall breathe out; or, (8) trains himself: calming the mind-conditioner I shall breathe in ... shall breathe out; then that bhikkhu is considered one who lives constantly contemplating feeling in feelings, strives to burn up defilements, comprehends readily, and is mindful, in order to abandon all liking and disliking toward the world.³⁰

Bhikkhus, I say that attending carefully in the mind to in-breaths and out-breaths is a certain feeling among all feelings. Bhikkhus, for this reason that bhikkhu is considered one who lives constantly contemplating feeling in feelings, strives to burn up defilements, comprehends readily, and is mindful, in order to abandon all liking and disliking toward the world.

Bhikkhus, whenever a bhikkhu (9) trains himself: thoroughly experiencing the mind I shall breathe in ... shall breathe out; or, (10) trains himself: gladdening the mind I shall breathe in ... shall breathe out; or, (11) trains himself: concentrating the mind I shall breathe in ... shall breathe out; or, (12) trains himself: liberating the mind I shall breathe in ... shall breathe out; then that bhikkhu is considered one who lives constantly contemplating mind in the mind, strives to burn up defilements, comprehends readily, and is mindful, in order to abandon all liking and disliking toward the world.³¹

Bhikkhus, I do not say that *ānāpānasati* is possible for a person who has straying mindfulness and lacks ready comprehension. Bhikkhus, for this reason that bhikkhu is considered one who lives constantly

29. "Contemplating body in bodies" means seeing the truth of bodies directly within bodies themselves and seeing all the components of the body as being small bodies within the collective body. The breath is one body. It conditions all kinds of bodies, whether physical or mental, beginning with the flesh body up to the joy of *jhāna*. Contemplate these bodies until there is no more attachment to any of them.

30. Contemplate feelings in the same way that bodies have been contemplated. Contemplate *pīti* and *sukha* until there is no attachment to any feelings anywhere.

31. Contemplate the mind in the same way as bodies and feelings were contemplated, until there is no attachment to any mind states.

contemplating mind in the mind, strives to burn up defilements, comprehends readily, and is mindful, in order to abandon all liking and disliking toward the world.

Bhikkhus, whenever a bhikkhu (13) trains himself: constantly contemplating impermanence I shall breathe in ... shall breathe out; or, (14) trains himself: constantly contemplating fading away I shall breathe in ... shall breathe out; or, (15) trains himself: constantly contemplating quenching I shall breathe in ... shall breathe out; or, (16) trains himself: constantly contemplating tossing back I shall breathe in ... shall breathe out; then that bhikkhu is considered one who lives constantly contemplating Dhamma in *dhammas*, strives to burn up defilements, comprehends readily, and is mindful, in order to abandon all liking and disliking toward the world.³²

That bhikkhu looks on with perfect equanimity because he has seen with wisdom the abandoning of all liking and disliking toward the world. Bhikkhus, for this reason that bhikkhu is considered one who lives constantly contemplating Dhamma in *dhammas*, strives to burn up defilements, comprehends readily, and is mindful, in order to abandon all liking and disliking toward the world.

Bhikkhus, this is how *ānāpānasati* that one has developed and made much of perfects the four foundations of mindfulness.

The Seven Factors of Awakening (Bojjhaṅga)

Bhikkhus, how do the four foundations of mindfulness that one has developed and made much of perfect the seven factors of awakening?

Bhikkhus, whenever a bhikkhu is one who lives constantly contemplating body in bodies³³ ... is one who lives constantly contemplating feeling in feelings... is one who lives constantly contemplating mind in the mind... is one who lives constantly contemplating Dhamma in *dhammas*, strives to burn up defilements, comprehends readily, and is mindful, in order to abandon all liking and disliking toward the world; then the *sati* of that bhikkhu thus established is natural and unconfused.

Bhikkhus, whenever the *sati* of that bhikkhu thus established is natural and unconfused, then the mindfulness enlightenment factor (*sati-sambojjhanga*) is engaged by that bhikkhu and he develops it further and finally its development in him is perfected. That bhikkhu when mindful in such a way selects, takes up, and scrutinizes these *dhammas* with wisdom.

Bhikkhus, whenever a bhikkhu is mindful in such a way, selects, takes up, and scrutinizes these *dhammas* with wisdom; then the investigation of *dhammas* factor of awakening (*dhammavicaya-sambojjhanga*) is engaged by that bhikkhu and he develops it further and finally its development in him is perfected. When that bhikkhu selects, takes up, and scrutinizes these *dhammas* with wisdom, unwavering effort is engaged by him.

Bhikkhus, whenever unwavering energy is engaged by a bhikkhu who selects, takes up, and scrutinizes these *dhammas* with wisdom; then the energy factor of awakening (*virīya-sambojjhanga*) is engaged by him and he develops it further and its development in him is perfected. When energy is

32. Contemplate the truth of Dhamma in all things (*dhammas*) until there is no attachment left to any *dhamma*, from the lowest to the highest, including *nibbāna*.

33. The original Pali explains how all seven factors can develop upon each one of the four foundations of mindfulness, with each foundation considered separately. Here, for brevity's sake, we have grouped all four foundations together.

engaged by that bhikkhu, non-sensual *pīti* arises.³⁴

Bhikkhus, whenever non-sensual *pīti* arises in the bhikkhu who has engaged energy, then the contentment factor of awakening (*pīti-sambojjhanga*) is engaged by that bhikkhu and he develops it further and its development in him is perfected. When that bhikkhu's mind is contented both body is calmed and mind is calmed.

Bhikkhus, whenever both the body and the mind of a bhikkhu who is contented are calm, then the tranquility factor of awakening (*passaddhi-sambojjhanga*) is engaged by him and develops it further and its development in him is perfected. When that bhikkhu's body is calmed there is joy and the mind becomes concentrated.

Bhikkhus, whenever the mind of a bhikkhu whose body is calmed and who is joyful becomes concentrated, then the concentration factor of awakening (*samādhi-sambojjhanga*) is engaged by that bhikkhu and he develops it further and its development in him is perfected. That bhikkhu looks upon that concentrated mind with perfect equanimity.

Bhikkhus, whenever a bhikkhu looks upon that concentrated mind with perfect equanimity, then the equanimity factor of awakening (*upekkhā-sambojjhanga*) is engaged by that bhikkhu and he develops it further and its development in him is perfected.

Bhikkhus, this is how the four foundations of mindfulness that one has developed and made much of perfect the seven factors of awakening.³⁵

Knowledge and Liberation

Bhikkhus, how do the seven factors of awakening that one has developed and made much of perfect knowledge (*vijjā*) and liberation (*vimutti*)?

Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu in this Training develops *sati-sambojjhanga* that depends on *viveka* (solitude, aloneness), that depends on *virāga* (fading away), that depends on *nirodhā* (quenching), that leads to *vossagga* (dropping away, letting go).³⁶

He develops *dhammavicaya-sambojjhanga* that depends on *viveka*, on *virāga*, on *nirodhā*, and leads to *vossagga*.

He develops *virīya sambojjhanga* that depends on *viveka*, on *virāga*, on *nirodhā*, and leads to *vossagga*.

He develops *pīti-sambojjhanga* that depends on *viveka*, on *virāga*, on *nirodhā*, and leads to *vossagga*.

34. This *pīti* is pure and associated with Dhamma; it has nothing to do with the physical senses. Such *pīti* occurs during *jhāna* and while realizing Dhamma.

35. The *bojjhanga* develop as follows. Mindfulness fixes on a specific thing and investigation of *dhammas* examines it in detail, with energy and effort, until contentment arises. Then, the mind calms until it becomes tranquil and is concentrated in contemplating the object. Equanimity firmly and unwaveringly watches over and guards that concentration, and the penetration of and awakening to Dhamma continues by itself until complete.

36. Here "*vossagga*" means no longer attaching to previous objects of attachment, because the mind is disenchanted with them and now inclines towards the quenching of *dukkha*, namely, *nibbāna*. *Viveka*, *virāga*, *nirodhā*, and *vossagga* are synonyms of *nibbāna*.

He develops *passaddhi-sambojjhanga* that depends on *viveka*, on *virāga*, on *nirodhā*, and leads to *vossagga*.

He develops *samādhi-sambojjhanga* that depends on *viveka*, on *virāga*, on *nirodhā*, and leads to *vossagga*.

He develops *upekkhā-sambojjhanga* that depends on *viveka*, on *virāga*, on *nirodhā*, and leads to *vossagga*.

Bhikkhus, this is how the seven factors of awakening that one has developed and made much of perfect knowledge and liberation.³⁷

After the Exalted One had spoken, the bhikkhus were contented and rejoiced at the Exalted One's words.

37. *Vijjā* is the insight knowledge of the path (*magga-ñāṇa*), that follows upon the insights experienced through the practice of *ānāpānasati*. Its function is to thoroughly penetrate and destroy ignorance (*avijjā*). *Vimutti* is insight knowledge of fruition (*phala-ñāṇa*), the result of the path having done its work of clearing away *avijjā*. It is the mind's direct experience of being liberated from *dukkha*.