

Using Ānāpānasati-Bhāvanā for Daily Life

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In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhadāsa gave regular lectures during the monthly international retreats held at Suan Mokkh and then Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage. Usually, Ajahn spoke in Thai and Santikaro Bhikkhu interpreted into English live. Audio recordings are now available from www.suanmokkh.org and www.bia.or.th. The following is a transcription generously made by a Dhamma volunteer. If you noticed possible improvements to the text and would like to contribute, please kindly contact the volunteer and the Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok (suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com).

In today's talk we'll consider the topic of using *ānāpānasati-bhāvanā* or 'the mindfulness of breathing' development of the mind, using it beneficially and advantageously in daily life, in ordinary life. We should talk about this because if we're unable to use mindfulness of breathing in our daily life, then it's not of very much value or worth. And so we'll talk about mindfulness of breathing meditation and about using mindfulness of breathing meditation beneficially in our daily lives or successfully in our daily lives.

We should look at the word *bhāvanā* or 'development.' When we say 'development' we mean various skills, abilities and functions are improved upon, made better and increased. This is what we mean by 'development.' So this is a development of these things each time while breathing in and breathing out. *Ānāpānasati-bhāvanā* – it's developing everything that has to do with the breathing, every time we breathe in and breathe out.

You're all aware that within this system of meditation, there are four groups or tetrads, four areas of practice and in each of these groups or tetrads there are four steps. So we will consider each of these tetrads or groups of things one at a time in order to see how they can be used successfully, how they can benefit our ordinary, daily lives.

The first tetrad is about the *kāya* (body) and the specific body we're talking about is the breath, the breathing and so we'll be considering how the breath is developed so that it is most advantageous and beneficial for life. We know that the breath is connected to the flesh and blood body, the body of skin and muscle

and that the breathing can have an influence on the flesh body and so we can consider how this can be done beneficially for the highest benefit of our life.

The breath is connected to rest of the body. There's a very important relationship between them and so when the breath is good, the body will also be good. When the breath is healthy, the body will be healthy. It is very difficult for us to arrange or manage the body directly. We can't just want it to be this way or that way. But we can arrange or manage the body indirectly using the breathing, by regulating or managing the breath we can indirectly regulate the body. And in this way we use the breath to have a body that is just right, which is appropriate for the work it has to do, for the duty of each moment of our lives. And so we can use the breath to have a body that is healthy, that has the abilities it needs to do its duties and a body that is relaxed, healthy and joyful. This can be done using the breathing.

Our first item is that the breath can be used for good health. By breathing long, fine and calm, the body will also be in a relaxed, healthy, calm state. So we can use the breath to maintain the body's health, to keep the body healthy. This item is a bit medical – it's actually has more to do with medicine than with religion – but it is still quite useful to have a healthy body and by regulating the breathing, this can be done.

The second item is that we can use the breath to drive any harmful or evil mental objects out of the mind. When there's some harmful or bad mental objects such as moods, emotions, thoughts, or whatever, in the mind, by breathing deep and fine and calm, these bad objects, these harmful objects will be chased out of the mind. And so whether these objects are connected with greed, hatred, delusion, fear or whatever, they can be chased away by using the breathing. This of course is of great benefit in our daily lives.

For example, fear – when fear enters the mind, if one breathes long, finely and peacefully, then that fear will be driven out of the mind. It's impossible to experience fear when the breathing is long, fine and calm and so we can free ourselves of fear in this way. Even in the body if there's a deep cut, and blood is flowing out of the cut, by breathing deep, long, fine, and calm the blood will flow more slowly. It can be even possible to make the blood stop coming out of the cut by breathing long, fine and calm. So in this way, the breath can have these useful influences not only on the body but on the mind as well in events that occur in our ordinary lives.

Further, through practicing the four steps of the first tetrad successfully, then we will have developed four things which are very important in our normal lives. These four things will be sufficiently developed to deal with the different

events and circumstances which will arise in ordinary and daily life. So by practicing these four steps, we will develop mindfulness (*sati*), *sampajañña* (wisdom in action) or maybe we could translate it ‘ready comprehension.’ We develop *paññā* (wisdom) and *samādhi* (concentration). These four comrades, these four tools, work together and they will be developed sufficiently in order to deal with events that arise in daily life. There will be enough mindfulness in these first steps. Mindfulness, *sati*, will have been developed enough, that there’s enough to use in all the duties and activities that come up in a normal day. There will be *sampajañña*, wisdom in action, ‘ready comprehension’ of the moment, of the situation, to know what needs to be done right here and now. That will be present. There will be *samādhi*, the mind will be sufficiently concentrated to do whatever work needs to be done. And lastly, the wisdom will be developing and this we mean understanding or insight into impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self will be slowly developing bit by bit or step by step – it won’t be complete at this level but it will be developing to the degree that various dualisms, all the pairs of opposites in the world, won’t be able to pull us blindly this way and that way. So there’ll be enough wisdom that we won’t be completely enslaved to dualisms. So these four things – mindfulness, ready comprehension, concentration and wisdom – will be adequately developed in the first four steps.

The thing that is essential, that is most important in all the activities of our daily life is *sati*, mindfulness. This may sound strange to some of you, especially those who don’t quite understand what *sati* is. But this is the truth that this is the one thing that is most important in our daily life is mindfulness. The Thai word for this is *raluek* which means to recollect or to reflect. *Sati* is more than just being aware. Some people think just being aware is to be mindful but there’s much more to it than that. Mindfulness involves to be able to reflect. It’s a reflective awareness, a recollective awareness. This is very important because it’s *sati* that oversees our life, it oversees every movement, everything we do. It’s *sati* that supervises and makes sure that things are correct and right. If it’s just awareness without the proper recollecting or reflecting, then *sati* isn’t able to supervise things correctly. So it’s more than just being aware. *Sati* is aware and it recollects. It retrieves the necessary wisdom, the knowledge that is needed in the situation. This is very important. It’s *sati* that oversees things and brings in the knowledge and wisdom, both worldly knowledge and insight knowledge, to manage, to supervise what is taking place. The last quality that is very important is that *sati* must also be fast – it must be quick, nimble and agile. If *sati* is slow then it’s almost no good because it brings the knowledge too late. It’s not on time. *Sati* must be right on time, it must be right there as things unfold. If it’s a moment too late, then we make a mistake. There’s nothing we can do except experience the *dukkha* of that mistake. But when *sati* is quick like a lightning bolt it retrieves

wisdom and brings it immediately to the event as it's happening. So this reflective awareness, this lightening fast reflective awareness is what is meant by *sati* and this is absolutely necessary in all the occasions, events, activities and duties of daily life.

In the Buddha's time, the fastest thing they had around was an arrow and the word *sati* has this same root as the word for 'arrow' – the word *sara* is the Pāli word for 'arrow.' They didn't have guns or things like that so the easiest thing to think of as the symbol for speed or quickness was an arrow. And so *sati* [Thai] or *sati* [Pāli], mindfulness, comes from this same root. This is very important that *sati* is quick, it's fast. For those of you who are still confusing concentration with mindfulness, and this is very common misunderstanding, the essential quality of *sati* is quickness, fastness, speed. This distinguishes *sati* from concentration. *Sati* needs this speed in order to bring wisdom to the experience, to the situation. If we remember too slowly or we reflect too slowly or if our awareness is too slow, then it's almost worthless. It doesn't do any good to figure something out the next day. It takes mindfulness that is very fast to bring the necessary wisdom right here and now where it's needed. And so the speed of *sati* is very important and so we develop *sati* to be as fast as possible so that it can always bring the necessary wisdom to the situation. This is the beauty of *sati* is to be the conveyance or vehicle, the thing that brings wisdom. And so to do this usefully, it must be very fast. If we're always thinking too slowly, remembering too slowly, experiencing a little bit too slowly, our sensitivity and awareness is dull and slow, then this is because *sati* is very weak and so we train *sati* to be quick, like a lightening bolt, like an arrow.

So we hope you're beginning to see how important *sati* is and that you'll be very interested in developing it. The English proverb 'be wise in time' points to the significance of *sati*. Without *sati*, we're not wise in time. The wisdom is slow or too late and then it doesn't do any good. No matter how much knowledge and wisdom we've got, we've developed, we've stored away, it's of no use if *sati* isn't quick enough to bring that wisdom and knowledge to where it's needed. So *sati* is the first thing, the most important thing that needs to be developed. To be 'wise in time,' depends on mindfulness that is very fast, that is right there where it needs to be, bringing knowledge right where the knowledge needs to be. And so other things will be developed as well but in mindfulness of breathing, *sati* is the first thing that is being developed and it's the most important thing. Without *sati* being developed the other thing won't develop. So *sati* has to be the first thing and then other things will develop as well. But *sati* is the most important – it's the first one and it's absolutely necessary. So please be very interested and attentive to the importance of developing *sati*.

For example if we're in the forest and we meet up with a tiger, if we're afraid that means there's no sati, there's no mindfulness. So when we're afraid, we don't know what to do – we don't know whether to run or throw something at the tiger or what. But if there's mindfulness instead of fear, then we know how to respond to the situation, we know what to do about the tiger, whether we should run or whether we should climb a tree or whatever. Even to just run over and climb up a tree takes mindfulness – without mindfulness, we probably couldn't even do that much correctly. So even in a situation like this mindfulness is necessary otherwise we just stand there afraid. Or if we're walking in the city at night and somebody pulls a gun on us, sticks a gun in our face, if there's mindfulness, we'll be able to do the most appropriate thing in that situation – we'll know what to do. But without mindfulness, we'll just make mistakes. Whatever we do will be wrong. So even in very worldly, ordinary situations like this, mindfulness is absolutely necessary if we are going to respond properly. So please be very diligent about developing sati using mindfulness of breathing.

You can think back to the arrow again. An arrow is very sharp – but no matter how sharp an arrow is, without speed, it can't penetrate its target. The most sharp and pointed arrow needs speed in order to pierce and penetrate its mark or target. That speed of the arrow is sati, mindfulness, and the sharpness, the point, the sharpness is wisdom, is knowledge. Without that speed, wisdom cannot function, wisdom cannot penetrate to the situation and take care of things in the correct way. So without sati, all the wisdom in the world is useless, it's wasted, it's sterile without mindfulness, sufficiently fast mindfulness to bring the wisdom where it's needed like an arrow. An arrow needs both speed and sharpness – without the speed, the sharpness is wasted, the arrow doesn't do anything. So this shows how all the learning, all the knowledge, is of no value without mindfulness.

We don't have to talk about the forest really, we can talk about at home, at work, at the office. No matter what we're doing – whatever work or duty or chore or task we must do – mindfulness is absolutely necessary. Even at the office, if there's no mindfulness or at school or wherever, without mindfulness when something comes up, we'll be afraid or confused or worried or doubtful or lack confidence or something like this and won't be able to properly respond to whatever came up. But with mindfulness, none of those things occur and we're able to use our knowledge, skills, and ability to respond and do the work correctly. Whatever the task is, it can be done correctly. Even very mundane things at home or at the office – without sati, we just get afraid and maybe we're doubtful, we don't have confidence in what we're doing, we worry or the mind is scattered, wandering all over the place, because there's no sati. But as soon as there's

mindfulness, then it's possible to do the task, the job, the work, correctly, to use wisdom, knowledge, and skill that we already have.

Even in the most ordinary movements of our daily life sati is necessary – just merely to sit down or to lean over and lie down or to stand up – all of these require sati. Without sati we don't do these things very well and we can even do them in a wrong, harmful or dangerous way. But if there's mindfulness, even these most basic movements of life are done well, they're done in the best way possible so that no problems arise. Going to the toilet, urinating, defecating, even things like this require mindfulness – without mindfulness we don't do these things correctly and problems arise. All the little movements – at home, at work, even just leaving our room – this requires sati. Without sati, we leave our room and then we don't remember – did we lock the door? Did we turn off the light? There wasn't mindfulness about were these things done or not and so then we worry about it all day long – did I lock the door? Did I turn off the light? This is because of a lack of mindfulness. But with sati, when leaving our room, we know what to do and do it and we're completely aware of this and so there's no room for doubt or worry afterwards. And this applies to all the basic simple movements in our daily life. Sati is necessary. And even more than that, in doing these basic little activities – lifting our hand, closing the door, walking, standing – all these require sati and in doing them with sati we are training, we're practicing, we're further developing sati. So not only do we need sati but we use these little movements throughout the day, all the activities of the day in order to train and further develop sati. We use the sati we've trained and then we further develop it in all the little movements – getting up, walking, sitting down, brushing the teeth, whatever. Sati's the most important thing – without it, nothing else can function properly. And so we use and train sati in all the movements of our daily ordinary life.

For those whose work or duties require a lot of speed, then sati is even more important. For example, many athletes – football players, boxers – require a lot of speed in their work and so they need sati even more in order to be able to perform their jobs, their skills as is necessary. Sati must be highly developed and so they must be very careful to train sati sufficiently. So in all the work of our life, whether we're an athlete or not, whatever things we're doing, we need sati and we need to keep training it so that it is as quick as possible in order to do its job as well as possible in all the moments, all the movements, all the occasions of our normal life.

Now when sati is well enough developed, when it's quick enough, when it's right where it needs to be, right on time, then it can recollect or retrieve wisdom and bring it right where it's needed. And then what we call this when sati

has brought wisdom right where it's needed right on time, then we call that *sampajañña* which is translated in all kinds of different ways. We won't translate it right now, we'll just explain it. *Sampajañña* is that wisdom, wisdom will manage the situation, will see what is correct and will see that what is correct is what is done. Wisdom does the function of knowing what is correct and proper. But that cannot be done without *sati* overseeing and directing things, supervising things and making sure that the wisdom is right there, right where it's needed, bringing the wisdom right into the experience or situation. This *sati* and wisdom functioning together we can call *sampajañña*. The mindfulness brings wisdom there and that wisdom that is functioning at the right place in the right way with the speed of *sati*, the two working together, we can call *sampajañña*. We can see *sampajañña* as being a development of mindfulness or we can see it as being a form of wisdom – *paññā*, *sampajañña*, very closely related words. But we can see them as *sati* and *paññā* in action, functioning, working to deal, to respond correctly to the experience, to the situation.

There's a Thai saying that literally is translated "With knowledge flooding over one's head, one still can't save oneself." Even with knowledge overflowing, flooding over one's head, one can't save oneself. There might be something in English that's the equivalent but the translator can't think of it right at this moment but the meaning is clear. Even if you graduate from university, even ten universities, with all the knowledge in the world – without *sati*, it's all a waste, it's worthless, it can't do any good. In order to survive, it's necessary to have *sati* to apply, to bring that knowledge where it's needed. So all the knowledge in the world is useless without *sati*.

Once there is mindfulness, wisdom, and wisdom in action or ready comprehension, *sampajañña*, once there are these three things, the question remains is there enough strength or power behind them and so this is the fourth factor that's needed or the fourth comrade which we call *samādhi* (concentration). Concentration provides the power and strength to give *sati*, *sampajañña* enough energy to completely fulfill their function to perform their task completely. Sometimes there's some mindfulness and wisdom but there's not enough strength and so they don't completely do what needs to be done. And so there must also be enough concentration to supply that energy, the strength to do these things. And so in mindfulness of breathing, even in the first tetrad, these four things – mindfulness, wisdom, wisdom in action, and concentration – are all being developed and then all four of these need to be used and trained, further developed in our normal lives.

So to summarize *ānāpānasati*, even just the practice of the first tetrad allows us to have a good healthy body, allows us to drive away harmful, evil

mental objects, mental states, emotions and so forth and then allows us to develop these four comrades – mindfulness, wisdom, wisdom in action and concentration – to a pretty good degree so they can be used to deal with the situations that come up in ordinary daily life. Just through the practice of the first tetrad these benefits are developed and if you consider them and reflect on them, you’ll see that this is really quite a lot to develop, even just this much is something very valuable and important for our lives.

Now we come to the second tetrad which is about the *vedanā*. This word *vedanā*, the Pāli word, is difficult to translate into English correctly but the standard translation of *vedanā* as ‘feeling’ or ‘feelings’ is good enough. But be careful, by ‘feelings’ we don’t mean emotions, we’re not talking about those kinds of feelings but the way to really know the *vedanā* is not to just translate it but to understand that the *vedanā* are the things that all living, all feeling organisms, including of course human beings are enslaved to. These *vedanā* are things, these feelings are things that lead us around by our noses. They’re always pulling us around this way and that way. We are enslaved by them. And once they lead us around somewhere, then we start indulging in these *vedanā* and then they are able to lead us astray, we get lost in the *vedanā*. This is not only true of human beings but it’s true of any living thing that has feelings, that can feel. And so there’s much more to *vedanā* than just feelings. Many of us think just ‘feelings come and feelings go’ but there’s a lot more to it than that. We become enslaved to these feelings. They lead us around and then we become lost in the feeling. They’re a lot more powerful and dangerous than most people realize.

Because of this power of the *vedanā*, it’s very important that we have a correct practice in order to train with them and there’s a very profound natural truth about the *vedanā* which you need to observe – but this is often overlooked. This fact is that the *vedanā* are the things that lead to thoughts or concepts, ideas, however we want to translate it. But because of *vedanā*, this stirs up, this conditions thoughts, ideas and so forth. When there’s a feeling, then we think about and then all kinds of thinking is stirred up. Sometimes it’s good thinking or nice thinking but sometimes it’s bad, harmful, ugly thinking. Often we think too much but even sometimes we don’t think enough and this is all because of the *vedanā*. Some people go crazy because they think too much and even many of us would like to think less. Sometimes we don’t want to think but the thinking goes on and on because we are unable to control the thinking. Sometimes we’d like to think nice thoughts but instead we think ugly, evil, nasty thoughts because we’re unable to control the thoughts and the reason we can’t control or regulate the thinking is because we’re unable to control or regulate the *vedanā* because we’re not able to be on guard with the *vedanā*, we’re unable to keep the thinking under

control in ways we need it. So this is why we need to have a meditation practice that works or deals with the *vedanā* and this is why it's necessary to have the second tetrad of *ānāpānasati* that deals with these feelings.

(Sometimes I use the word 'control' but maybe the word 'regulate' or 'oversee' is a better word for in order to regulate the *vedanā*, in order to keep them on track, it's necessary to regulate them from *phassa*.) *Phassa* is 'sense contact,' the contact at the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body or mind. When the sense organ and the sense object and sense consciousness come together, that is sense contact. And the way to regulate the feelings, the *vedanā*, is right from that moment of contact. This means that there must be good old mindfulness, wisdom in action (*sampajañña*), and *samādhi* (concentration) there, at *phassa*, in order to oversee the contact, in order to regulate the *vedanā*. If mindfulness is too slow and wisdom is lacking then there will arise foolish or we could even say stupid feelings, ignorant feelings which get us into all kinds of trouble. But if mindfulness, *sampajañña*, and concentration are sufficient – quick enough, strong enough, wise enough – then the feeling is wise feeling. By wise feeling, this is a kind of feeling that is regulated, it's not out of control, its feeling that goes along the right way, a useful way, a wise way, a peaceful way and that can be beneficial. And so to regulate the *vedanā* it's necessary to do it right from the moment of sense contact, whether it's seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching or mental. And that is done with mindfulness, wisdom in action, and concentration, all of which are trained in the second tetrad of mindfulness of breathing. Now we develop these using the feelings so that these are able to operate in regard to the feelings.

If you think about it, you'll see that if we can regulate *phassa*, contact, sense contact, then we're able to regulate the feelings and we've mentioned how feelings are the cause or origin of thoughts and thinking so this means that by regulating *vedanā*, we are able to regulate the thoughts and the thinking and all that mental proliferation and everything. If we can control contact, *vedanā* and thoughts and ideas and concepts, then we're able to regulate life. So to be able to do this is to be able to regulate all of life, to keep life in balance, to keep it from going off track or to get into problems. This is done by training the second tetrad on *ānāpānasati* properly, life can be regulated, can be kept on the right course in this way.

Now we come to the third tetrad of *ānāpānasati* which has to do with the *citta* (the mind). Actually this tetrad is not quite as important as the previous one, but it's still quite useful to work on and so you should also give it your attention. In this tetrad, we examine all the different kinds of mind or we could say states of mind, the different states of mind, the different 'minds,' to see which ones are

harmful and which ones are not, which minds are beneficial and wholesome and which are not beneficial, which have no use. So we get to know all the different possible kinds of mind to see which are useful and beneficial. And then we learn to regulate, to oversee the mind, to keep the mind on track because if we don't, the mind can drift off or get lost in defilements, it can drop into lower or uglier states. But by knowing the different states of mind and being able to regulate it then the mind will remain in the useful and beneficial states. And so we train the mind to be able to be pure, we learn to make the mind pure and we learn how to concentrate the mind to make it firm and stable. And then we learn to have the mind let go so the mind can release things that it has previously clinged to. And so when the mind is trained in being pure, concentrated, and free or liberated, when it can let go, it is letting go and released from things, then that mind is the very best and most useful kind of mind and it doesn't fall into harmful states of mind or evil states of mind.

If one successfully practices this third tetrad, then one will get a prize and the prize from this tetrad is having the best possible kind of mind, having the highest mind or the most excellent mind. By this we mean, through this tetrad, the mind is trained to be one... it's happy – it's a joyful mind, it's always in a state of joy but we're not talking about a lowly, defiled or impure kind of joy. It's a very pure kind of joy, very harmless kind of joy. It's all... [?? 44.39] mind is pure, it's clean, there's nothing dirty or there's nothing cluttering it up. Third, it's absolutely solid and strong and firm, because it's very well concentrated. And last, this mind is free. It's not stuck to anything and nothing can stick on to it – there's nothing that can grab onto this most excellent mind and this mind isn't going around attaching or clinging or getting stuck on things. So we can say that this is the most free mind and when the mind is absolutely free like this, then it can go about its activities in daily life. Any, even the most mundane activities, can be done most well when the mind is free like this. Nothing about those activities can cause a problem. And the activities, the work or the chores are done very well and so this is the reward of the third tetrad – a mind that is free and then that free mind can be used in doing all the things we need to do in our normal life.

The most joyful mind is the mind that is free. Many people can't understand this but the happiest, most joyful mind is when the mind is free. When the mind isn't attached to anything and when nothing is attached to the mind. When the mind is free and liberated like this, then it is the most happy. But this is often misunderstood and not seen. And so we often think that the best happiness, the highest happiness is the kind of being enticed, by being lured and tricked by various interesting or enticing things such as sex for example. Many people take that kind of happiness to be the highest happiness. But if you examine and look

at this for yourself, and this is something that can be experienced in daily life, that the happiest, most joyful mind is when the mind is absolutely free, when it's not clinging to anything and when nothing is clinging to it. This kind of happiness, this mind that is free, is the reward, the prize that comes from practicing the third tetrad of mindfulness of breathing.

There's one more even higher benefit of this mind that is very free. When the mind is free like this, then it will become obvious that everything happens through the mind – pain and joy, sorrow and happiness. Whatever happens, happens through the mind. And we'll see that there is no such thing as a 'soul' or 'self,' or personal identity that is outside the mind. Sometime in India, they developed the idea, the theory, that there was an *ātman*, a 'self,' a 'soul,' a 'life monad,' a 'personal identity,' whatever we want to call it, that was separate from the mind, separate from the body as well. And then this idea spread throughout the world, including to the Middle East and to Europe. But if we see, with this free mind, if we see absolutely clearly what the nature of the mind is, we'll see that there's nothing outside the mind. There's no such thing as a self or whatever outside the mind. And then if we look even further and see the mind on the deepest, most profound level then we see that even the mind itself is not a soul, an atman, or whatever, that there's just the mind and the body. The body is just a container, a vessel that supports or holds the mind but everything happens through the mind and when the mind is highly developed as we've described, then this most profound truth is realized – that there's no 'self' or 'soul' outside the mind and that the mind itself is not a self or soul and in the mind there is no self, no soul, no atman or anything like this. This knowledge, this is the highest knowledge of Buddhism, this is the pinnacle of Buddhism to see that there is no self, soul, atman or whatever anywhere, whether inside or outside the mind. And this is the highest wisdom of Buddhism. Once this knowledge was discovered, there has not been anything higher or more advanced than discovered soon. This is the highest knowledge of the human species. This is the deepest wisdom of our race, of our species, that the wisdom, the knowledge of not-self, that there's just body and mind and besides the body and mind there is no third thing, there is no self, soul or whatever you want to call it. There's merely the body and mind functioning according to the law of nature. This is the highest knowledge of the human species.

Now we come to the fourth tetrad, the tetrad about Dhamma. You've already heard that the first step of this tetrad has to do with contemplating *anicca* (impermanence). *Anicca* means that ... it's the constant flux, the perpetual flowing of things. Everything is flowing. This is something that has been taught in a number of places; it's not particular to Buddhism. Even Heraclitus, a Greek

philosopher about the Buddha's time, was teaching what was known '*Panta Rhei*,' which means 'all flows' or 'everything flows,' just ceaseless flow, continual flux, this constant change – this is the meaning of *anicca*, impermanence. It's the constant change. – nothing is stopping. And most of all, nothing stops for us, for what we want, for what we don't want. It just keeps on flowing and flowing and is nothing, nothing stops. So in this first step of the fourth tetrad it's to learn how to practice, how to behave towards all these things that are constantly flowing. Instead of to want them to do this or that, we learn how to practice towards them so that we can accept that constant and ceaseless change, instead of wanting them to stop and be this or that for us. And so this is the first step of this tetrad, practicing, contemplating about *anicca*.

Even the positive is ceaselessly flowing and the negative is constantly changing as well – so where's the difference between the two? Both the positive and the negative are constantly flowing. So we don't indulge in these, we don't get caught up in them, we just stay in the middle, neither getting happy about the positive and angry about the negative, not loving the positive and hating the negative, but just staying in the middle because it's just constantly flowing. When we realize that all things are constantly flowing like this, then we don't indulge in them, we don't get caught up in them, we are able to stay free of them. This is what happens when we are able to see and realize *anicca* and this not only happens in formal meditation but to see this throughout our daily life, to see the ceaseless change of things throughout our daily life so that we no longer get lost in the positive and negative that go flowing by in normal life.

Because we don't see this *anicca*, because we don't look at things this way, we see everything in dualistic terms. We see things as good and bad, positive and negative, beautiful and ugly and so forth and we've got tens, dozens, hundreds of these pairs of this and that, this and that, all these pairs and then these are constantly pulling us around this way and that way, always being led around by these dualistic pairs, by these opposites. This happens because we don't see *anicca*. Our mind doesn't find a middle position that is not being pulled this way or that way because in not seeing this the mind is always getting caught up into extremes, finding itself in very distant positions instead of having a balance, a natural equilibrium that is in the middle. This is what happens – *anicca* is not seen when impermanence is overlooked. But when we realize this truth of impermanence, we then see that all those things are the same. In seeing impermanence we realize that positive and negative, good and bad, and all those pairs, they're just ceaselessly flowing, there's nothing absolutely real about them, there's just the constant change. And when the mind sees this, then it's no longer getting pulled apart by all these dualities, it's no longer like being pulled in one

direction by the neck and the other direction by the feet and then scorched by fires around the middle. And when all this pulling, all this pulling and burning ends, just think how joyful that is, how peaceful, how nice that is to be free of all that pulling and tugging. This is the benefit, the result, of realizing *anicca*, impermanence, to no longer be pulled apart by dualities.

The first step of this tetrad is to realize impermanence and then we realize that there's nothing worth attaching to, that there aren't any of those dualities, there's nothing that can be, that deserves being attached to. When this is realized, then there comes the next step which is *virāga* (the fading away, the unattaching). It's the fading away of attachment, the unattaching, seeing that things shouldn't be or are not worthy of attachment, attachment begins to dissolve, break up and fade away and fade away and fade away. Attachment weakens and lessens, until eventually, attachment is gone and when attachment is faded away to a certain point then it ends, attachment ends, it's over, it's finished, attachment is quenched. This is what the fourth tetrad is about – realizing impermanence, then watching attachment fade away and watching attachment cease. This is what happens in the final tetrad of *ānāpānasati*.

So this begins with realizing the impermanence of all conditioned things, seeing that all phenomena are ceaselessly flowing. To the degree that *anicca* is seen, to that degree, attachment disappears. To see impermanence more and more, then attachment disappears more and more. Realizing that ceaseless flow, seeing that all those things we thought, the dualisms we were giving pluses and minuses to, all those things, seeing the constant change, we stop giving them the pluses and minuses and attachment fades away, it dissolves bit by bit, it breaks up bit by bit, it fades away and eventually ends. And then there is non-attachment. This is the highest benefit, the furthest result of the practice of mindfulness of breathing as well as anything, this is the highest possible benefit a human being can get from anything is non-attachment – no longer attaching to anything, no longer seeing things as positive and then wanting them, desiring them, loving them, getting lost in them or seeing things as negative and being afraid of them or worried about them or hating, not liking them. All those plus and minus and all those defilements disappear because there is non-attachment. This is the highest thing a human being can achieve or get. This is what happens through mindfulness of breathing. But this doesn't just happen during mindfulness of breathing. The mind that is not attached isn't attaching in normal life as well. So to realize this is the highest benefit within our ordinary life as well because then it's in ordinary life that is truly ordinary and truly natural because it's no longer disturbed by liking and disliking, wanting and not wanting and all that loving and hating which is constantly disturbing the mind and pulling it apart. This non-

attachment is the highest result that is realized in the fourth tetrad, part four of mindfulness of breathing.

So far in this talk, we've looked at each tetrad one at a time – we've looked at these four parts of mindfulness of breathing one by one and looked at the benefits of each part. Now we'd like to group them all together and see the whole thing, not as separate parts but just the whole practice. What are the benefits of the whole thing? The first thing we can say is that through the practice of *ānāpānasati* the four Dhamma comrades of mindfulness, wisdom, wisdom in action (*sampajañña*), and concentration, are developed. Through this practice all four of these things which are absolutely necessary in our normal life, because these aren't fully developed, we have all kinds of problems in our normal life and make all kinds of mistakes. But when these are sufficiently developed then we don't have those problems anymore. These four are developed through *ānāpānasati*. Wisdom is perfected in the fourth tetrad, in the especially the highest wisdom of non-attachment. This is perfected in the fourth tetrad. Concentration is especially developed in the first tetrad but then it is further refined after that. Mindfulness, *sati*, and *sampajañña*, ready comprehension, are developed throughout, in every tetrad and in every step. But in the practice as a whole, you can see how all four of these are developed, are perfected and then we can use them in whatever we're doing, whether a formal meditation practice or just the meditation of daily life. Please think about this and understand carefully and clearly the benefits then you will have a sufficient appreciation for this practice.

Next, the way of life is absolutely clear, bright, apparent, and obvious. The way of life, both physically, mentally, and spiritually, these three aspects of the way or the technique, the way of life or the technique of living, the art of living, this is completely open, obvious, and clear. This is the second benefit of the whole practice.

All our work will be done correctly. Our worldly work, the work of earning a living, taking care of our possessions, our house, whatever, all of this work will be done correctly and without any problems because of the skills and qualities developed through mindfulness of breathing. And then of course the religious duty, our religious tasks or work is also done correctly, and perfected and fulfilled through the skills and knowledge developed through mindfulness of breathing. In *ānāpānasati*, all the knowledge that's necessary, all the skills and abilities that is necessary to accomplish correctly both our worldly work and our religious or spiritual work, all that is developed sufficiently. And so there are no problems when we go about both our worldly and our religious duties.

Also our life will have the correct... life will be traveling correctly or walking, following its path correctly. You may not have realized this before, but life is following a path, life is a traveling or walking along a way or a path. Though you may not have realized this, this is the way it is. In life, there is a constant development, life is developing, moving onward, lifting up further and further and further. There's this development in life or this following of a path or we can see it as an evolution of life. Life is constantly evolving. All that constant change can be an evolution toward the goal of life, the highest thing which man can achieve, women as well. This will be correct and proper through the fulfilling the four tetrads of mindfulness of breathing. If all four tetrads are practiced fully and correctly then life will be following the right path. And it will follow the path correctly, successfully and efficiently, so that the goal of life will be achieved before the body dies. This is very important – through practicing the four tetrad correctly and perfecting them, then life will travel along, will follow its path to the goal of life and reach the goal of life before the body dies.

Even better than that, while we're traveling along the way of life, while following the way of life, we're happy. It's not just following this but there's joyfulness in following the way of life. This is the result of correctly practicing the four tetrads of *ānāpānasati*. Not only is there the correct walking and developing and evolving of life, but it's joyful. This is best we can do. There's nothing better than this but to follow the way of life and enjoy it – to be happy in this, not need to look for happiness in anything else but following the way of life in reaching the highest thing that a human being can achieve. This is the best there is – there's nothing better than that. And this is the ultimate benefit of *ānāpānasati* and it applies not only to formal practice but just to all of life. These benefits are realized by breathing in and out throughout the day. So this is the best we can do and we'll enjoy it and so on this note, we'll end today's talk and we'd also like to thank you for being very good and patient listeners for this two-hour talk. Thank you very much.

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Transcribed by Jessica (jess.haines8@gmail.com) in Sep.-Oct. 2015
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