

## Mindfulness with Breathing (Ānāpānasati), Part 1 of 8

### WHY DHAMMA?

by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

Interpreted into English by Santikaro Bhikkhu

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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. All Ajahn's teachings are now available on:*

[www.suanmokkh.org](http://www.suanmokkh.org),

<https://soundcloud.com/buddhadasa> and

<https://www.youtube.com/@buddhadasabhikkhu7829>.

*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*

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On this first day we need to ask the question, “Why Dhamma?” But before we can answer this, we need to know what Dhamma is. Then, we can move on to considering why we need to study and practice Dhamma. I’d like to give you a quick summary of the meaning of ‘Dhamma.’ ‘Dhamma’ or ‘Thamma (ธรรมะ)’ is the secret of nature which we need to know in order to develop life to the highest possible results, for the highest possible benefits. When we talk about developing life to the highest level, we’re talking about developing life so that it is free of all problems and all *dukkha* or *tukkha* (ทุกข์) so that life is completely free of everything that is appropriate to the meaning of the word ‘problem’ and everything that is appropriate to the meaning of the word ‘*dukkha*.’ This is what we mean by ‘developing life.’

We need to speak about the secrets. When we understand the secret of something, then we are able to practice it or carry out that thing successfully for the highest results, the most benefits. For example, the exploration of other space or the things that have been done with atom, atomic power or nuclear things. This has only been successful through the knowing of the secrets of these things – the secret of space and the secret of the atom. So this is allowed development in this area. The same thing is true with life. In order to develop life, we must know the secret of life. So we’re going to talk about the specific secret of life. This is what we need to look into.

The secret of life is Thamma or Dhamma and we can say that the secret of life is, in Thai, ‘Thammachat (ธรรมชาติ).’ Thammachat is usually explained or translated as nature but the meaning that many westerners give to the word ‘nature’ is quite different than the word ‘Thammachat.’ Thammachat means something which exists within itself, by itself and of itself.

So when we say ‘nature,’ this is the kind of meaning we’re giving to it. So the secret of life is Dhamma, is nature, that which exists in it by itself. When we speak about the secret of life and we’re speaking about Dhamma, we can talk about the four meanings of Dhamma. The first meaning is nature itself. The second meaning is the law of nature. The third meaning is the duty that must be performed according to that law of nature and the fourth meaning is the fruit or benefits that arise out of performing that duty according to the law of nature. This is the four meanings of Dhamma.

So I need to ask you to take a look at yourselves or more specifically at this body and mind that we imagine to be ourselves. So take a look at this body and this mind. If you look, then you will see nature, you will see that the body and everything else is nature. And then you will see the law of nature. And in this body and everything, we can see the duty that must be performed in line with that law of nature. And then fourthly we will see the results of performing that duty. If the duty is performed correctly, the results will be well-being, tranquillity and coolness. But if the duty is performed incorrectly, then the results will be *dukkha*, unsatisfactoriness, discomfort, anguish, pain, frustration. So we can see that if we look at the body, mind and everything here, we will have all four meanings of the word ‘Dhamma’ or ‘nature.’ So when we really look at the body and everything, we will completely see all four meanings of the word ‘Dhamma’ or the word ‘nature.’ All these four meanings are right here. And when we see these four meanings, then we will understand the importance of the meaning of the secret of life. In seeing these four meanings, in seeing nature, then we will begin to see that we don’t completely understand it all yet, that we haven’t truly penetrated through the secret of what we call ‘life.’ We haven’t really grasped the secret of Dhamma. So to fully understand these four meanings, we have to really see secret of life. So let’s take some time to study this matter until we understand it sufficiently to go on.

Let’s also consider the word ‘development.’ When we talk about developing life, we usually don’t have a very clear understanding of what this means, and we have almost no understanding of how far life can truly be developed. We don’t realize the highest benefits that are available to mankind. So we don’t take much interest in the secret of life which enables us to reach those high levels. So in talking about developing life, we need to realize and understand how far life can truly be developed. So this is another point which we must consider and understand.

So when we talk about developing life, we mean developing life to the highest possible level, the most supreme level that is possible for humanity. This high level can be described as to develop the mind or to develop life so that it is above all problems, to develop life so that it is completely above and free of all levels and meanings of the word ‘problem’ and all levels and meanings of the word ‘*dukkha*.’ For those of you who haven’t heard this word before, ‘*dukkha*’ is the word that can be translated as unsatisfactoriness or suffering, conflict, agitation – it’s all the things that disturb life. *Dukkha* is what we’re running from all the time. It’s what’s interfering with the life of calm and ease. When life is developed above all *dukkha*, then life has reached its highest possible level.

Now some of you have probably never really seen some of the problems that are afflicting your life. Many people have never really looked closely enough to themselves. So they just think that all these little difficulties and problems are the normal ordinary way things are. So they look at this themselves and say “I don’t have any problem, everything’s OK” because we learn to accept that all this thing is normal and ordinary. So we need to take a very serious and close look in our own lives and see if there really is anything that we could call a ‘problem.’ Is there any *dukkha*?

Is there anything unsatisfied or disturbing about our lives? This is something to look at within yourself and this is very necessary to do when we come to a place like Suan Mokkh. Because if you haven't look inside and you are unaware of any problems or any *dukkha*, then there is no value in studying the Dhamma. The Dhamma can have nothing to offer you unless you realize that you have some problems. So don't forget to take a good look inside and see what's there.

When we talk about developing life, we can explain this in four areas or under four topics. We can say that there are four aspects of developing life. The first aspect is to prevent dangerous things from arising – to prevent dangerous things from doing anything nasty to life. The second meaning is to clear away – to get rid of and destroy any of the dangerous things that have arisen in life. The third meaning is to give rise, to produce and to have progress in things which are useful and beneficial to life. Then the fourth is to maintain and protect and preserve things that have already occurred and that are useful and beneficial. These are the four aspects of developing life: preventing the arising of dangerous things, getting rid of dangerous things which have already happened, causing useful things to arise, and maintaining the useful and beneficial things that have already arisen.

The development of life is our duty – this is the direct meaning and importance of the word 'duty.' To develop life – this is the duty of all human beings. In order to develop life, we must have in our possession four very important tools. We can call this 'four Dhamma tools' of 'four Dhammas' which we need to develop life. These four tools of Dhamma are *sati* – mindfulness, *sampajañña* – wisdom in action or applied wisdom, *pañña* – wisdom, knowledge, and *samādhi* – concentration. These are the four tools which are needed to develop life.

The practice of *vipassanā* meditation, insight meditation, is a way to develop the mind, to train the mind so that these four Dhamma tools are developed and increased. This is why we need to be interested in meditation, in *vipassanā* practice – in order to have these tools that are necessary for the development of life.

As far as this thing called 'mental development' or '*vipassanā* meditation,' there are many different kinds of this available, many different technics for developing the mind. But of all the technics which we have come across, all the different practices that we have seen of and heard of, the one that is most useful and most powerful is called '*ānāpānasati bhāvanā*' or 'mindfulness of breathing meditation' – the practice of mental development based in mindfulness of breathing. So this is the practice that we will be talking about in detail from here on.

The correct meaning of *ānāpānasati bhāvanā* is that we study reality, or we study nature, and we do this by taking one aspect or object of nature or reality, and we study that object every time we breathe in and every time we breathe out. So this is the meaning of mindfulness of breathing meditation. To take some objects of nature and study it while we are breathing in and breathing out and while being mindful of breathing in and breathing out – this is the correct meaning of mindfulness of breathing. This is the very powerful secret of nature which you ought to understand. So we're going to repeat it some more. The powerful secret of nature is that if you want to know the reality of anything whatsoever, the way to do it is to study the reality of that thing within the mind. To whatever it is you want to understand and know, you take the reality of that thing within the mind and study it there, every time while breathing in and breathing out. While there is the awareness – the knowing of breathing in and breathing out, that the reality of that thing, that truth within the mind is studied, analyzed, scrutinized, observed until the reality

of it is seen while breathing in and breathing out. This is the most profound secret of nature which enables us to develop the mind and realized the truth of nature that we need to know.

Actually, the meaning of *ānāpānasati* can be quite broad and general. In its most general sense, *ānāpānasati* means to think about or to reflect upon anything while breathing in and breathing out. This means that you could be thinking about your home in some foreign countries while breathing in and breathing out. That would be a form of *ānāpānasati* – mindfulness of breathing. Or you can think of your mother or your wife or your husband or your children or your family while you are breathing in and breathing out. This is the broadest meaning of mindfulness of breathing but that's not what we're interested in doing here. Instead of just taking anything as the object of mind, we take Dhamma, truth, reality, nature as the object of the mind. And we take specifically aspects of nature, specific truth which when developed and used will free the mind of suffering, of *dukkha*. So in the *ānāpānasati* we practice here, we take certain specific Dhamma and study them while we are breathing in and breathing out, and in so doing we develop the four Dhamma tools of mindfulness, wisdom in action, wisdom and concentration which we've mentioned earlier. This is the kind of *ānāpānasati* that is most useful.

Now we have to ask, if you are not already asking, “What are these Dhamma, these truths of life that must be studied? What are these truths that must be studied within the mind, that must be brought into the mind and study them? What are these Dhamma that we need to know?”

The answers to these are the secrets of the body that we need to know in order to extinguish *dukkha*. The secrets of the things we called the ‘feelings’ – the *vedanā*. The *vedanā* – what we mean here is that whenever there is sensory experience, such as seeing or hearing, there is a reaction of the mind that is either pleasant – satisfaction with the sense experience, or unpleasant – dissatisfaction, or a neutral kind of uncertainty – these are the feelings. And the secret of these feelings is the second secret we need to know. The third secret is the secret of the mind and then the fourth secrets are the secrets of ultimate reality, of the profound truth, of the way things are. This is what we need to bring into the mind. These are what must take place in the mind and be studied within the mind. These things are so important to know. And I'd like you to memorize these four basic things that we need to study, and I'd like you to do so with the Pāli word that you'll have the most clear understanding later. This will be a great reference to you in your meditation practice.

The first thing is *kāya* or body, *vedanā* or *vetana* (เวทนา), *citta* – the mind, and Dhamma or *Thamma* (ธรรมะ). So *kāya*, *vedanā*, *citta*, Dhamma – please remember these four things. This is the four important things that we need to study within the mind. These have to arise. We have to learn how to develop these within the mind and study them there. This is because these four things are already taking place in life. These are the four fundamental aspects of life, but they are also the source of many of our problems. Because we don't understand these four things, so the problems are happening in our life. Because we can't control these four things, because we can't keep them within valid limits, they are source of *dukkha*. So thus, it is very important to study these four things: *kāya* – the body or bodies, *vedanā* – feeling or feelings, *citta* – mind, and Dhamma – truth, reality, nature, whatever.

So let's look at each of these four in detail. The first one, ‘*kāya*’ – this word literally means group and it can apply to all sorts of groups of things but in this case, we're speaking specifically of the group of things that are compounded together into what in English we call the ‘body.’ In fact, the English word ‘body’ also has this meaning of group. So when we say ‘*kāya*,’ we're

talking about a group of different things, of different organs, of different elements, which are compounded together into this body. This is the meaning of *kāya*. We need to study this *kāya* and see how it exists, and what it is like. And, most of all we need to study the one very important subcomponent or component of this body which we can call the ‘breath body.’ In this overall body or this body group – the flesh group, there is one subgroup which we can call the ‘breath’ or the ‘breath body.’ So we need to study this ‘breath body’ especially. We need to study how the breath exists, how it acts, how it changes, and also what influence it has on the rest of the body. This breath body is very important because we can see that it is the thing which sustains life for the rest of the body. If this flesh body were to lose the breath body, it will no longer be able to maintain itself. So we can see the breathing as that which sustains the rest of the body. This point has a very important relationship that we need to study.

Now this overall body, the flesh body, is something that we cannot directly control, that is not within our ability. However, there is a way to indirectly control it, to master it or to gain mastery over it. This is by using the breath body. By using the breath body properly, we can control the overall flesh body. This is something that we need to study and learn about. This is what we’re talking about when we talk about the secrets of *kāya* or the body.

So in the first step of the practice of the mindfulness of breathing, we work with the *kāya*, specifically we work with the breath body. So what we do is we study the breathing, we study all kinds of breath. Every kind of breath that occurs, we note it and study it – short breath, long breath, calm breath, violent breath, fast breath, slow breath, gentle. All these kinds of different breath which arise, these need to be studied. We keep on studying them in order to understand the characteristics of the breath and the conditions of the breath, and we just keep on studying the breath constantly. Each kind of breath that arises, note it, clearly see it in order to learn about it. And after doing this for a long time and becoming clear about the nature and the characteristics of the breath, then we can begin to study the influence of the breath body. The breath has a great influence on the rest of the flesh body, on the rest of the physical body and this influence needs to be seen very clearly. So after studying and observing all the many kinds of breath, then we must observe and note this influence of the breath upon the rest of physical body. We do this until we see absolutely clearly that the breath and the rest of the body are completely, very closely interrelated to the point where we see that the breath body conditions the flesh body – that this breathing conditions the physical body. When we see that the breath is the conditioner of the physical body, then we will begin to understand the secrets of the body.

So we can summarize this first step of the practice by saying that in studying the *kāya*, the body, especially that component of the body which we call the ‘breath,’ that we will see that this breath has a very important and strategic influence upon the flesh body and we see that the breath body, the breathing is the conditioner of the flesh body. This is a very important secret, and this secret can be used to unlock other secrets about the body, such as the fact that we can use the breath to gain mastery over the body. It is not possible, for instance, to calm the flesh body directly. I don’t think anybody can sit there and make the body absolutely calm directly. But by using the breathing, by calming the breathing, by making the breathing more and more gentle and peaceful, then the flesh body will become calm and peaceful. So this deeper secret is that by calming the breathing, the flesh body becomes calm. When the flesh body calms, there arises joy and happiness, and some very nice *vedanā* or feelings and many other useful things also will happen.

Let's imagine that we fully understand the secret of the body. After that we need to understand the secret of what we called 'vedanā.' The *vedanā* or *vetana* – these feelings are the things that have the highest and most powerful influence on human life. These feelings have very powerful control over what we do. This is not only true of human being, it is true for all living creatures, for all living things, that the *vedanā* influence life in a very powerful way. We can say that the entire world is controlled by the *vedanā*. So we need to really look into these things. We can see that when there are happy feelings, pleasant feelings arising, the mind is in slave to these things and does what it can to get more of these feelings, to sustain them. So the pleasant feelings are always pulling the mind in a certain direction and conditioning certain kinds of activity. Then the unpleasant feelings which we don't at all like, these condition the mind in a different way. These influence life in another direction but still leading to all kinds of habitual responses. So these *vedanā* have very powerful control over life in what we do. This means that to be free, we need to understand these things which dominate the world. We can say that the whole world is within the circle of these *vedanā*. The whole world is trapped within the influence of this conditioning of the *vedanā*. If we study Dhamma, we also know that there are other things which influence the mind, but we can say that the *vedanā* have the strongest and most powerful influence. So it is necessary for us to understand the secret of these things that we call 'vedanā.'

I'd like to say a sentence which you may laugh at. I'm going to say it anyway even you want to go ahead and laugh. If we can master the *vedanā*, we will be able to master the world. If we can control the *vedanā*, we will control the world. You may not believe this. But you can see that in this world where there is nobody interested in controlling the *vedanā*, nobody has any interest in getting any mastery over these feelings, so we can see that the world is out of this control. Nobody controls the feelings, so the world is completely out of control. There're also some crises and problems arising constantly. All you have to do is open any newspaper and you can read about them. All the wars, the famine, the corruption, the pollution – all these things are because we are not at all interested in controlling the feelings and getting any mastery over them. If we can completely control the feelings, then we would control the world. This is something you need to consider.

We can say that the *vedanā* are the focal point, are the meeting place for the arising of all the causes of problems in the world. The *vedanā* is the place where all the causes of our problems happen. All of our problems have their causes centered around the *vedanā*. It's because of *vedanā* that there is craving. Because there is hunger and ignorant desire in the world. Because of our craving, our hunger for this and that, we do all kinds of activities. So these causes of problems. This craving, our ignorant desires and various activities we do that are inspired by this craving. These all arise centered around the *vedanā*. If we could have control over the *vedanā*, if these can be kept within safe limits, kept within reasonable bound, then the causes of these problems will not be able to arise. So life and the world will be free of these problems. If we can understand the secret of the *vedanā*, then we will be able to control them. And by knowing this secret of the *vedanā*, of these feelings, then we will know the secret of controlling the world.

Now for those of you who believe in things like reincarnation and rebirth or transmigration of spirit or soul or whatever, if you want to bring this transmigration or whatever you believe in under control, the way to do that is to bring the feelings under control because it is the feelings that need to rebirth in this way or that way, in heaven or in hell. So you need to understand the secret of the *vedanā*. To know the secret of the *vedanā*, we need to understand a few things about it. First, we need to study and understand the *vedanā* themselves. We need to see them as they

arise in the mind. These feelings as they happen within the mind, these things that the mind feels – these need to be known. This is the first.

The second is that we need to see how the *vedanā* condition the *citta*. You'll hear this word, '*citta*,' quite often, so I might as well explain it a bit. In English we have the word 'mind' which we generally associate with the head. We also have the word 'heart' which most people put somewhere in the chest. When we use the word '*citta*,' it would include everything that is meant by mind and also what is meant by heart. So we can say that *citta* means mind and heart and consciousness. But *citta* – you can't stick it in the head and you can't stick it in the heart, you can't locate it in such a crude way. So that's a little reference for you to understand this Pāli word, *citta*.

The second thing about the feelings that need to be understood is how the feelings influence the *citta*. Before we talk about how the breath influences the physical body, there's a parallel relationship between the *vedanā* and the *citta*, the feelings and the mind-heart. So the second thing to know about the *vedanā* is how they influence the mind or how they condition the mind. This is the second thing.

The third to know is that by controlling the *vedanā*, the mind can be controlled. This is also parallel with what happen with the breath and the body. There're these three things that make up the secret of the *vedanā*: seeing the *vedanā* themselves, seeing their influence – their conditioning power upon the *citta*, and then seeing the secret that by controlling the *vedanā*, the *citta* (the mind-heart) can be controlled.

The first step of the practice related to the body. The second step related to the *vedanā* followed the same principle. So it's helpful to compare these two. In the first step regarding the body, we find out what it is that conditions the body, and then we study that thing – we study that conditioner of the body until we know it in great detail. Then we study how that thing conditions the body. And then by controlling that thing which conditions the body, we can control the body. This means that we control that thing in a way that the body becomes more calm and peaceful. So in the first step, we learn how to get control of the body, how to master the body by gaining mastery over the breath, the thing that conditions the body.

In the second, we'll be dealing with the feelings – the *vedanā*. We need to, at this point, start to get control over the mind – the *citta*. So we see what it is that conditions the *citta* and the thing that conditions the *citta* is the *vedanā*. So we study the various kinds of *vedanā* until they are seen in great deal and fully understood. Then we see how it is that the *vedanā* conditions the mind. We study this conditioned relationship. Then lastly, we see that by mastering the *vedanā* – by controlling them, the mind will develop in ways that we want. We can cause the mind to be in certain states by our mastery over the *vedanā*. For instance, the *vedanā* can be calmed in such a way that the mind will become very calm and peaceful – very tranquil. This is how the first step regarding the body and the second step regarding the *vedanā* are parallel and shows how they follow the same basic principle of development.

In the first step, we study the secret of the body. In step two, we study the secret of the feelings and now in step three, we study the secret of *citta*. Let me point out that we don't go on to this step three until we've fully mastered steps one and two. We don't go hopping around but when we have mastered steps one and two, then it is time to look into the secret of the *citta*. The *citta* is what leads life. The mind is the leader, and the body is just the tool which is led around by the

mind. Mind is what leads life. It is the director and leader of life. Then this mind, the *citta*, must be brought under control. It must be mastered as well.

The *citta* or ‘jit’ in Thai, ‘*citta*’ in Pāli – is a very subtle, very fine and detailed thing. So it is very difficult to study. For this reason, very few people bother to study it. They’re completely ignorant of the way it works. This doesn’t mean that it is impossible to study the *citta*. All of us are capable of studying the *citta* and able to learn its secret. Don’t be frustrated or depressed or give up on the necessary practice of studying the *citta* because the *citta* has such a primary role in life that we absolutely need to understand the secret of the *citta*. The thing about the *citta* is that we can’t really know it directly. It’s impossible to directly know the *citta* but we can know the *citta* indirectly through the things we call ‘thoughts.’ So the way we study the *citta* is by studying the thoughts. The thoughts are the conditions or the symptoms of the mind, of the heart. So when we say ‘thoughts,’ we would also include things like emotions and other things. The way to point out this important truth is that take the example of electricity. You can’t really see electricity itself. So what we know are the symptoms of electricity – current voltage and all other things, power, the various attributes or symptoms of electricity – but we are unable to know the electricity itself. So the same with the *citta*, we can’t directly experience it but we can experience the thoughts. So during the day, how many kinds of thoughts are arising? Many different kinds. So we can study those thoughts. By studying these thoughts, we can come to know the *citta* through those thoughts, through those symptoms of the mind-heart.

In order to know the secret of the *citta*, remember that in step two we got control over the *vedanā* that which is the conditioner of the *citta*. Now in step three, in getting control over the *vedanā*, we learn how to master or control the mind. So now there is control over the mind. The mind can be made to think in any kinds of different ways. The mind can think in this way or that way, whichever way it wants. So in order to study this, we can make the mind be satisfied or dissatisfied. The mind can be in a state of liking or disliking. The mind can experience different kinds of happiness and joy. It can be made to be glad. It can also be made to be unhappy if we decide to do so. The mind can be concentrated. It can be concentrated in different ways on different things on different levels. And then finally the mind can be liberated. There are many things which the mind attaches to, and we can make the mind let go of those things. There are things which attach to the mind, and we can liberate the mind from those things. So in studying the secret of the mind, this ability to control the mind is used to study them, the *citta*, in these different ways.

After learning the secrets of the body, the feelings and the mind, when these first three parts of the practice have been fulfilled, then we come to part four or step four, which is to learn the secret of truth – to learn the most supreme secret of life or nature, which is the ultimate truth of all reality. What the secrets that we’ve already learnt, we take these secrets up and use them to study the supreme secret of all nature in our life. So by looking at these various things, we uncover the various facts of life. We study these things until we see these ultimate truths, such as the ultimate truth; the truth of *aniccā*, *dukkha*, *anattā*, *suññatā* and *tathātā*. *Aniccā* or impermanence – the truth that all conditioned things are in a state of impermanence and flux. *Dukkha* – the fact that all conditioned things are susceptible to be the cause of *dukkha*, all these impermanent things are unsatisfactory. The truth of *anattā* – that all things whatsoever are ‘not self’ – are ‘not soul’ and in none of these things there’s a soul or a self. *Suññatā* – that everything is void. Here we mean void of an ‘I,’ of a ‘me,’ of ‘mine,’ of ‘self’ – this is voidness. And then lastly, the highest, most profound truth – *tathātā*, suchness, everything is just this, just thus, only

thus. So in the fourth part of the practice, the ultimate truths of everything are studied. In this way, when the mind understands these truths of all reality, then the mind will not make any more errors. It will keep itself on the path of correctness so that no mistakes are made, and that no more *dukkha* is caused. This is the secret of the fourth part of the practice. This is the final secret.

It may make you laugh. It may be a bit amusing that the highest truth of all – that the ultimate truth of everything or of the entire universe, or everything in the universe – this highest truth comes down to nothing but ‘suchness’ – the *tathātā*. In Thai they say “*chen nun eng* (เช่นนี่เอง)” which is something that people say to a small child when its toy breaks, “*Chen nun eng*” – “Don’t worry about it, it’s only that, that the ways things are.” This is what it means, *tathātā* – it’s just this, it’s only this; it’s thus and nothing different; it’s not in any other way; it’s just this. This is the ultimate most profound truth of everything. This is where it all ends up in this truth that everything is thusness or suchness this way. It’s not good and it’s not bad. It’s not positive or negative. It’s not a gain or a loss. It’s not winning or losing. It isn’t an advantage or disadvantage. It’s just *tathātā* – the state of being thus, the state of being just like this, free of positive and negative, sin and merit, virtue and demerit and all these things. This is the kind of amusing end – this is the ultimate truth, *tathātā*, that needs to be seen to fully realized this ultimate secret of all nature.

Now in this fourth part of the practice, within it four steps, the first step is to see the truth of all things: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, not self, voidness and then *tathātā*. As we begin to see the ‘thusness’ of everything, the *tathātā*, as we begin to realize *tathātā*, then attachment to things begins to break up. This habitual tendency to attach to things begins to dissolve as we begin to realize *tathātā*. And as attachment begins to break up and fade away, then attachment ends. There is the ending or cessation of attachment. Once attachment has ceased and ended, then the mind is free. So this practice ends and the mind realizes that it’s free. However, when the Buddha talked about this, he used the word that we translate as ‘throwing back.’ The Buddha said, “at the end we throw everything back.” The meaning of this is that we are all thieves. We’ve been thieves for all our lives. We spend our whole lives stealing things from nature. We take this and claim it to be ‘mine’ – ‘my body,’ ‘my mind,’ ‘my thoughts,’ ‘my this,’ ‘my that.’ We’ve been stealing things from nature all along but at this last step of this practices is to realize “Oh, it’s nature! It’s not mine!” And then we start to throw everything back to nature. Having realized that it doesn’t belong to us. So this is where the practice ends.

First the mind penetrates to the ultimate truth of *tathātā*. In realizing this truth, then there is the fading away of attachment to things. You can’t attach to something when you see that it’s only *tathātā*, then there is nothing to attach to. As attachment fades away and dissolves, then there is cessation of attachment and then the throwing away, the throwing back of the object of attachment and the mind is free. This is the fourth part of the practice – to realize this deepest and most ultimate truth or secret of nature – the secret of Dhamma.

All religions end in the same thing. We call this ‘emancipation.’ So this practice we’ve been talking about, *ānāpānasati*, ends in emancipation. To this word, emancipation, we give it the meaning that I have just described – this ending of attachment and throwing everything back to nature. This is our meaning of emancipation. Other religions may give some other meanings to the word “emancipation.” That’s up to them but we understand it as we have just described. So the practice of *ānāpānasati* is a systematic process, a natural series of steps that lead to emancipation.

Today we talked about it in a general way. We've given a general outline of what happens in the practice so that you will have an overview of where this practice goes – the path leads to emancipation and we tried to show it to you today. In the following talks, we will supply the details of how to practice mindfulness of breathing in order to emancipate life. So for today we will end at this point and later we will continue with the details of the practice. Thank you for coming. So now the meeting is closed.

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Transcribed and lightly edited by Pranee & Supavadee in 2024

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